

2015 CHRISTIAN HOME MONTH

PLANNING RESOURCES FOR CONGREGATIONS & CONFERENCES



Families: Many Forms, Common Faith! Called to Justice

The *Christian Home Month* resource is for family ministry leaders, Family Life Council chairpersons/coordinators, family leaders and family ministries teams in local congregations. It is designed to help local congregations develop and strengthen faith in the home; celebrate and support Christian families in their faith journey, and celebrate Christian Home Month. Although Christian Home Month is typically celebrated during the month of May, congregations may choose any month of the year to focus on the Christian home and its key role as a center for faith formation.

Our theme for 2015 is *Families: Called to Justice*. In the book of Amos we read, “...let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream.” (Amos 5:24, NRSV) Those words are both thrilling and terrifying. What is the justice we seek? How do we experience God’s justice? What do we see in the world around us that calls for God’s justice? And as families, what does it mean to be called to justice? For Christians, probably the simplest way to look at God’s justice is God’s desire for all to be treated as God would treat them.

Think for a minute of what you know about the injustices in our world today. Here are some of the questions related to justice:

- Where is justice at school when children who are different in some way are bullied by others?
- Where is justice for those who have been abused and cannot face their abusers?
- Where is justice when there

are those who work hard each day and do not have enough to support their family?

- Where is justice when older adults who can no longer care for themselves suffer at the hands of caregivers?
- Where is justice when those seeking freedom in a new land are ignored or vilified?
- Where is justice when loved ones are randomly shot and killed in street violence?

These questions call upon all of us who claim the name Christian to examine our ways of living, participate in the study of scripture, and to practice justice in our homes, our churches, our schools, our workplaces, and our communities.

We believe you can begin by supporting the families through observing Christian Home Month, using the suggestions here to strengthen the home as a place for living justly, and designating a day of prayer to pray that all families might be places of love, peace, justice, and hope.

CHRISTIAN HOME MONTH QUADRENNIAL THEMES 2013-2016

2013: Families Called to Love

2014: Families Called to Peace

2015: Families Called to Justice

2016: Families Called to Hope

 **DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES**
The United Methodist Church

EQUIPPING WORLD-CHANGING DISCIPLES
UMCdiscipleship.org

CALLED TO JUSTICE: WORSHIP SERVICE RESOURCES

The following helps are suggested for use when celebrating Christian Home Month or Family Life Sunday as part of a worship service. For additional resources, consult the United Methodist Book of Worship.

Call to Worship

Leader: Come! Gather near to praise God, the creator of us all.

People: We come to recognize and support families who practice justice in their homes and communities, and in the world.

Leader: Come! Gather near to listen to God's call to speak out on behalf of the oppressed.

People: We come praying for families who struggle for fair treatment, who are without communities who care for them.

All: Let us worship, trusting in God's love and mercy. Praise be to God!

Hymns

(Choose which hymns most fit your worship service)

- "The Voice of God is Calling", *United Methodist Hymnal* 436
- "Sois la Semilla (You Are the Seed)", particularly verse 2, *United Methodist Hymnal* 583
- "What Does the Lord Require?", *United Methodist Hymnal* 441
- "The Summons", *The Faith We Sing* 2130
- "The Family Prayer Song", *The Faith We Sing* 2188
- "Goodness is Stronger than Evil", *The Faith We Sing* 2219
- "A Place at the Table", *Worship & Song* 3149

Scripture Readings

Lectionary readings for the day may be used, or you may choose from the following:

- Old Testament: Micah 6:6-8
- Psalter: Psalm 97
- Gospel: Matthew 15:21-28
- Epistle: Galatians 3:23-29

Prayer

For Courage to Do Justice, *United Methodist Hymnal* 456

Bread and Justice, *United Methodist Hymnal* 639

A Litany for Families

Leader: Let us give thanks...

People: For families that work hard to be caring and supportive of one another and help other families gain strength.

Leader: Let us pray...

People: For families suffering because of abuse, who feel separated from God, who experience constant hardship, or are without homes.

Leader: Let us speak...

People: For families that are judged wrongly, for those caught in a system of mistrust and greed, and for families for whom the world is a cold and uncaring place.

Leader: Let us seek guidance...

People: For families who read the scripture, pray together, worship in the home and seek to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

All: O God, we are your children. Help us remember that justice was not meant for only a few but was intended for all. Open our eyes for the ways we as a community of faith can be a witness to all in our homes, in our communities, and in our world. AMEN.

CALLED TO JUSTICE: FAMILY DEVOTIONAL TIMES

- **Talk together in the family about what is justice.** Justice is when all of God's creation (the earth, animals, people) are treated with love and care so that all have what they need. We have injustice when some do not have food or shelter; when the earth is harmed; when there is inequality because of culture, ethnicity, or religion.
- **Sort through clothing and belongings.** Find those items that are in great shape, but are no longer being used by your family. Give these items to clothing closets or shelters.
- **Take the word *JUSTICE* and create an acrostic – J.U.S.T.I.C.E.** Using each letter of the word, list words or phrases that become a prayer. For example:

Jesus
Undergird us so that your life
Shines and
Tells others of God's desire for Justice
In our
Communities and homes
Everywhere. Amen

- **Place on your dining table cards with the following discussion starters on them.** Once a week choose a card and invite everyone at the table to say what they think.
 - Tell about an act of justice you've read about in the paper or seen on television and say why you think this is important.
 - Name someone who you know prays for you. Why do you think this person prays for you?
 - Think of another country where you would like to

live. Tell us which country and why you would like to live there.

- Tell about something you've seen this week that you feel was unjust. Why?
- Where did you see someone taking care of God's earth this week? What did they do?
- Tell about a time when you gave up something for Lent. What was it? How did this make you feel?
- Who is the nicest person you know? Why?
- Who are the people you feel sorriest for? Why?
- What is your most important treasure in life? Why?
- Tell about something you saw in nature that made you glad for God's creation.
- **Plan a family day for helping others.** Contact agencies in your community and find one that will allow your entire family to volunteer for an evening activity or a weekend.
- **Set aside a family game night at least once a month.** Rotate which family member chooses the games each month. Play games together chosen by that family member.
- **Borrow enough hymnals from your church so that each family member has one.** Do a search of songs that speak about justice. Sing the ones you know. Try to learn one new one.
- **Establish a Family Covenant for Living Justly.** This covenant can be renewed every three months; however, the basic elements of the covenant stay intact. The promise of love, forgiveness, acceptance, truthfulness, growth and witness is the basis of the covenant. This leads to living justly in the family.

FAMILY COVENANT FOR JUSTICE

This covenant will be in effect from _____ (beginning date) to _____ (ending date).

In order that our family may be one that promotes justice as we learn to live in this world together, we promise one another to:

1. Seek God's presence through regular Bible study, reflection and prayer together.
2. Love one another unconditionally – loving the person even while naming behaviors that might need to be changed.
3. Be truthful to all members of the family.
4. Spend time together determining ways we can do our part to care for the whole world: recycling; taking food to food banks; providing clothing for clothing closets.
5. Learn about hunger. Eat with, prepare, and/or serve one meal for the homeless.
6. Educate our family about justice issues in our church and community and together write a letter to an official in local, state or national government either praising their efforts for justice or asking for them to take action for justice.

Signed by: _____

All family members sign the covenant.

CHRISTIAN HOME MONTH: PLANNING CALENDAR

2015

APRIL: Begin plans for celebrating Christian Home Month in worship, in small group gatherings, with a church wide meal, and in homes. Ask families to bring to the church pictures and written statements about how they participate in acts of justice at home and in their communities. Use these to create a bulletin board and put in the church newsletter and bulletin.

MAY: Carry out plans made for celebrating the Christian Home. Recognize women in the congregation for those who are mothers in families and mothers in faith. Celebrate Pentecost Sunday on May 24. Invite congregation members to wear red. Make a Pentecost bulletin board and ask individuals and families to add to the tree the names of those in the congregation who have helped the church grow. Celebrate Peace with Justice Sunday on May 31.

JUNE: For Father's Day, recognize men in the congregation for those who are fathers in families and fathers in faith. Publish a devotional guide for families to use on vacation. Include scripture, meditations, and prayers.

JULY: Plan a service project that allows families to serve in a soup kitchen or help prepare food for community dinners that serve the homeless. If you have a community food bank, each week in July, ask the congregation to bring in a particular food item needed by the food bank.

AUGUST: Have an "end of summer"

ice cream social. Ask church members to bring school supplies that can be given to local schools for families who cannot afford them for their children.

SEPTEMBER: Hold a parenting class for parents and grandparents. Use the book, *iKids: Parenting in the Digital Age* by Craig Kennet Miller.

OCTOBER: Celebrate the Children's Sabbath on the second Sunday of October. Call Discipleship Ministries, 1-877-899-2780, ext. 1760, for instructions on how to get resources.

NOVEMBER: Provide a bulletin insert with prayers for families to use in celebrating Thanksgiving. Plan needed resources for celebrating Advent and Christmas in the home. Provide a list of places needing volunteers and who would welcome families volunteering together for Thanksgiving celebrations for those who are without food and shelter. On or prior to November 29 (the first Sunday of Advent), offer an Advent workshop for families. Invite individuals to bring to the church one Advent/Christmas decoration they use in their home and talk about why this is important to them. Provide a devotional guide for lighting the Advent wreath and praying together at home. Use the guide provided at www.umcdiscipleship.org or write your own.

DECEMBER: Encourage families to take time weekly for Advent devotions in the home. List weekly an area of need in your community that families can adopt as a project of caring during the month of December.

2016

JANUARY: If you haven't yet used the Covenant of Justice, invite families to do so as a New Year Resolution. Publish a list of "beat the winter doldrums" ideas: playing board games as a family; telling one another stories of ancestors; having a star-gazing night; acting out a favorite Bible story.

FEBRUARY: Celebrate Marriage Ministries on the Sunday nearest Valentine's Day. Recognize anniversaries, engagements, and milestones in the lives of couples in the congregation. Encourage families to have pancakes on February 9, the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday, February 10, remembering that with Ash Wednesday we begin Lent and a time of study and self-denial.

MARCH: Plan a retreat for couples. Use the book, *Love Never Ends: Growing Together in Marriage and Faith* or contact one of the organizations that provide marriage enrichment training. For information on organizations that provide such training, check out the information at www.umcdiscipleship.org. Offer a church wide study on the "United Methodist Social Principles" using the power point and other resources found at www.umc-gbcs.org. Provide resources for families to observe Holy Week and Easter in the home.

APRIL: Begin plans for celebrating *Christian Home Month* in May. Contact the Office of Family Ministries to request any new resources available for support of family ministries.

RESOURCES THAT SUPPORT MINISTRIES WITH FAMILIES

The Christian Home Month Resource, published annually by Discipleship Ministries, is designed for leaders of family ministries. Available on the Discipleship Ministries website, print copies are also available from the Family Ministries Office, Discipleship Ministries, PO Box 340003, Nashville, TN 37203-0003. Phone: Toll-Free 877-899-2780 Ext. 7141. Fax: 615-340-7071. Email: ndunlap@umcdiscipleship.org.

Additional articles and ministry ideas are available at:
<http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/leadership-resources/intergenerational-family-ministries>.

■ CALLED TO JUSTICE: RETREAT MODEL

1. The congregation prays for the retreat, the participants, and the team that will plan the retreat.
2. A retreat planning team is created, made up of 3-5 people in the congregation.
3. The retreat team meets and: Chooses a date and location; decides on the study to use; designs and plans the retreat; prepares a budget; secures a location; recruits leaders; plans times for prayer and worship; arranges all food needs; plans an offering for an organization in the community that has as its mission helping families in need of lodging and food; designs a flyer or announcement which includes a registration form and information about fees, dates, and location.
4. The team prepares for publicity and promotion. Someone from the team prepares information and distributes it through the church newsletter, e-letters, worship bulletins, and other avenues in the congregation. Regular notices and registration forms should appear beginning six months prior to the retreat and leading up to the week prior to the retreat.
5. The team collects supplies needed for the retreat. Those needed, if following this retreat model: hymnals or songbooks/sheets, Bibles, board games, sports equipment, bag of miscellaneous items (e.g. masking tape, box of tissues, car keys, hula hoop, basketball, running shoes, toothbrush, roll of toilet paper, towel, spatula, hat, etc.), *Christian Home Month* (a copy for each participant), poster board for each group, markers, writing paper, magazines, scissors, glue, a movie that focuses on justice such as *Glory Road* or *Remember the Titans* (or another movie of your choice that you have reviewed and deemed appropriate), play dough, chenille sticks, drawing paper, markers.

Friday

4:00–6:00 P.M. – Registration

6:30–7:00 P.M. - Dinner (A served meal or bring-your-own-bag supper)

7:15–7:30 P.M. - Gathering Time. Share announcements and Opening Prayer. Sing familiar camp songs, favorite hymns, and praise choruses. Be certain to explain the theme of justice. Give every family a copy of *CHM*.

7:30–8:15 P.M. - Divide participants into “family” groups of 4-6 (mixing up actual family members with others in the congregation). Have a bag of miscellaneous items available and let each group choose an item. Instruct all participants that each family group gets the next 30 minutes to prepare a short commercial, no longer than 90 seconds. The commercial must be on the theme of “justice.” Find one

or two people to be emcees for the show. As family groups prepare their commercial, the emcees should wander among the groups to create a list of commercial titles and set an order for the “performances.”

8:15–9:00 P.M. Let the emcees guide groups through presenting their family commercials on justice to the total group. At the conclusion, ask them to list some key words or phrases they heard that help us focus on justice.

9:00–10:00 P.M. - Snack and Game Time. Share snacks. Have board games available, music to listen to, and other activities for all ages.

Saturday

8:00–9:00 A.M. – Breakfast

9:00–9:30 A.M. - Morning Worship. Lead the group in singing, scripture and prayer.

9:30–10:30 A.M. - Ask the participants to reassemble in the same “family groups” as the previous night. Provide a Bible, a hymnal, markers, paper, and a piece of poster board for each group. Ask each group to read Amos 5:24. Ask each group to talk together about what would make ‘justice’ flow in their community. What would need to change? What would need to continue to happen? Make a list of these items. Next to each item, ask the group to list places or groups that address each of the issues of justice the group has raised. Using the magazines provided, ask each group to find pictures that would show what is needed to make each item listed “just” in your community. For instance, if “not everyone has enough food” is listed, select pictures of food. Glue the pictures onto the poster board to create a poster of what is needed.

10:30–11:00 A.M. – Break

11:00–11:45 A.M. - Distribute hymnals or song books to each group. Give them 15 minutes to locate a hymn or song that helps talk about justice. Ask them to rehearse this song so that they can teach it to the total group. Call the group together and invite each family group to share their poster and their song.

NOON–1:00 P.M. – Lunch

1:00–5:30 P.M. - Afternoon Fun. Encourage naps and recreation.

5:30–6:30 P.M. – Dinner

6:30–8:30 P.M. - Watch a movie that addresses “justice”, such as: *Remember the Titans*, *Selma*, *Glory Road*, or *Akeelah and the Bee*. As the group watches the movie, invite them to use the chenille sticks, play dough, or art materials to show visually what justice looks like to them.

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At the end of the movie, take some time to reflect together what they saw in the movie that helps us know ways to bring about justice.

8:30–8:45 P.M. - Break

8:45–9:15 P.M. - Lead the group in sharing and praying about their joys and concerns. Ask those who wish to name a song, or a scripture verse, or something they have seen this day that helped them understand God's peace.

9:15–10:00 P.M. – Snack and Game Time. Recruit volunteers to plan the ending worship service for Sunday.

Sunday

8:00–9:00 A.M. – Breakfast

9:00–10:00 A.M. – Closing worship

10:00–11:00 A.M. – Clean-up and Journey Home

CALLED TO JUSTICE: CONGREGATIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Reprint the Family Devotional Times material in your church newsletter or place it on your web site.
- Using the Planning Calendar, list one suggestion a month that details how families can engage in activities of justice.
- Collect stories from families of experiences they have related to justice and publish these (with their permission) in your church newsletter or e-newsletter.
- Enjoy a meal together at church. Include as part of the time together, making health kits to be distributed by the United Methodist Committee on

Relief (UMCOR). For instructions on the kits, contact your annual conference office or go directly to <http://www.umcor.org/UMCOR/Relief-Supplies>.

- Encourage families to adopt the Family Covenant for Justice and carry out the practices for at least a month. Suggest a starting day for all in the congregation to participate. As part of worship, ask those who intend to live the covenant to stand. Pray for all who are taking the covenant. On the ending date, ask all who lived with the covenant to stand. Recognize each and join in singing the Doxology or another song of praise, giving thanks for this commitment.