

2012 CHRISTIAN HOME MONTH

PLANNING RESOURCES FOR CONGREGATIONS & CONFERENCES

CHRISTIAN HOME MONTH QUADRENNIAL THEMES FOR 2009-2012

2009 : Families Called to Love

2011 : Families Called to Justice

2010 : Families Called to Peace

2012 : Families Called to Hope

FAMILIES

Many Forms, Common Faith!

Called to Hope



INTRODUCTION

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 2012 is Families: Called to Hope. One of the most hopeful hymns we have in the *United Methodist Hymnal* is “Amazing Grace.” When I was a child singing this in my church in Arkansas, I don’t know that I thought of how grace gives hope to us all. I certainly never spent much time thinking about the importance hope plays in helping us live a life of meaning and joy.

Think for a minute. What if you were on a game show and you had to answer the question, “What fills the earth?” Now don’t think of the scientific answers like “gas, rock or particles.” Think instead of those things that surround us as we live daily. It would be tempting to say “sin” or “violence” or “corruption.” And indeed there is enough of sin, violence and corruption to feel as if we are surrounded by those things which suck the joy out of living.

But now go back to that historic hymn, “Amazing Grace.” Think through the words. If you have a hymnal, read the verses. If you have a computer, look up the hymn through a search engine and read the words. I am struck particularly by verse three with its statement that grace brings us through dangers, toils, and snares. What a wonderful statement of hope!

Sometimes our family life can feel less than hopeful. Think of families who are struggling with any of the following issues: job loss; addiction to drugs or alcohol; abuse; chronic illness; death of a family member. Think of immigrant families brought to this country because of hope for a better life. Think of those families separated because of military service, incarceration, or financial circumstances. Think of those families who are simply worn out from balancing work, church and home. Think of all who live in circumstances that make life feel like drudgery rather than a gift from God.

The Christian faith offers words of hope to all. This has to go beyond platitudes and polite words. There are actions congregations can take in order to support families so that they can live in hope. Every time a congregation: offers opportunities for financial management; provides clothing, food, or shelter for those without these basics; offers English as Second Language classes to those new to this country; provides resources for home worship for those who might be unable to attend each Sunday; provides classes for parents to gain skills in parenting; offers places of belonging to children, youth, and adults—that congregation gives hope to those who might be at a place where they see no home.

As we look at the theme, Families: Called to Hope, the plans contained in the Christian Home Month resource provide information for congregations to plan worship services recognizing families and focusing on hope. Included also is a retreat plan, a covenant for families to use in their homes to foster hopeful living, and resource suggestions. We hope you find something in this resource that will inspire you, encourage you, and affirm you as you continue in this important work to which you are called. We want to assist in giving you energy and creativity for the work that you do as you embrace what it means to be a family in God’s eyes.



WORSHIP SERVICE RESOURCES

The following helps are suggested for use in worship for celebrating Christian Home Sunday. For additional resources, consult the *United Methodist Book of Worship*.

Call to Worship:

Leader: Come Worship! God calls us to face the world with hope.

People: We want to face this world with hope, but sometimes we are too weary or too fearful or too sad to feel any hope.

Leader: Come Worship! God offers compassion and comfort and rest.

People: We seek those gifts from God. Help us find them today.

Leader: Come Worship! God calls us as a people to live in hope.

All: We claim God's promises and embrace hope. Praise be to God!

Hymns:

 Choose which hymns most fit your worship service:

“Amazing Grace” #378, *The United Methodist Hymnal*

“Hymn of Promise” #707, *The United Methodist Hymnal*

“My Hope is Built” #368, *The United Methodist Hymnal*

“O God Our Help in Ages Past” #117,
The United Methodist Hymnal

“Light of the World” #2204, *The Faith We Sing*

“The Family Prayer Song” # 2188, *The Faith We Sing*

“Song of Hope” #2186, *The Faith We Sing*

“Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)” #3104, *Worship & Song*

Scripture Readings

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

Old Testament: Isaiah 9:2-7

Psalter: Psalm 65, Psalter 789, *The United Methodist Hymnal*

Gospel: John 14: 15-21

Epistle: Revelation 22:1-6

Prayer for Families:

“Gracious God, who created the families of the earth, we commend to your care all of the families of this congregation, all of the families of this community, and all of the families of this world. We pray this day that each home may be a home where hope gives light to life. We pray for those homes where there is no hope—where there is danger, violence, fear, loneliness, hurtful words, and unceasing activity without reason. We pray for children, youth, adults. We pray for parents, stepparents, foster parents. We pray for couples. We pray for those alone. We pray for those who have formed family from friendship. May your grace be present to all. Grant us wisdom to seek God's peace in our homes, in our communities, and in our world. Grant us courage to look for signs of hope in our homes, in our communities and in our world. Grant us hope so that in times when we see only the mean actions of human to human, we remember your presence and the promise of your kingdom on earth and in heaven. Amen.”

A Litany for Families

Leader: Let us pray for families

People: For families where children, youth and adults are nurtured to grow as God intended us to grow

Leader: Let us pray for families

People: For families who struggle with abuse, with violence, with fear, with stress, and with no time to spend with one another

Leader: Let us pray for families

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 the messages of justice, of peace, of hope and of love in such a way that those messages may be present in our homes, in our communities, and in our world. AMEN.



CALLED TO HOPE: FAMILY DEVOTIONAL TIMES

- **Remember your blessings, individually and as a family.** Set one night a week (at least) to eat dinner together as a family. At dinner go around the table and ask each family member to name an experience that brought hope to them during the week. Thank God for these experiences and for being able to share them with one another. Ask God to give hope and blessings to others (you can name specific persons in need of hope, such as people who are victims of abuse, of violence, of stress, immigrant families in your community, those who have lost their homes, or lost their jobs, or their families). As each person names a blessing, write it onto a slip of paper. Place this in a cup or a jar. When someone in the family has a hopeless day, take a slip from the blessing cup and read it to remind one another of hope.

- **Read books that show us how hope changes lives.** A few children's books to consider are:

Salt in His Shoes: Michael Jordan in Pursuit of a Dream

Brothers of Hope: The Story of the Lost Boys of Sudan

Star of Fear, Star of Hope

Island of Hope: The Journey to America and the Ellis Island Experience

Circles of Hope

- **Use the FACTS model for a ten-minute, five-step daily family devotional.** This can be used at the table, before everyone leaves for work and school, prior to bedtime—even in the car! Allow at least two minutes for each part:

Focus: Take two minutes of silence or silent listening to music and think about hope in daily living. Use the Twenty-third Psalm to focus.

Adoration: Sing a song or say words of praise to God.

Confession: Say to one another ways you have sinned or mistakes you have made. Offer to one another the words, "When we confess, God forgives us. Thank you God."

Thanksgivings: Share what you are thankful for today.

Supplication: Join hands with one another. Pray for your family, for those in need, and for the world.

- **Study scripture together.** Some of the key scripture passages that mention a source of hope are:

Genesis 8:6-22

Genesis 21:1-7

Joshua 4:1-7

Psalm 23

Psalm 65

Matthew 5:1-14

Matthew 28:1-10

Matthew 28:16-20

Romans 8:38-39

Ask one family member to read the scripture. After hearing the scripture ask each family member to say what that particular scripture means to them.

- **Establish a Family Covenant for Hope.** 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 hopeful living in the family.

FAMILY COVENANT FOR HOPEFUL LIVING

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

In order that our family may be one that promotes hopeful living with one another, we promise one another to:

1. Seek God's presence through regular Bible study, reflection and prayer together.
2. Seek ways to praise and lift up actions of others in the family that show ways family members are trying to live in God's image.
3. Each day offer a word or phrase of hope to others in the home. Say these as a blessing before leaving the house each day or as a blessing when you come together at the end of the day.
4. Learn about places in the community that offer hope to the homeless, those without jobs, those who are ill or those new to your community who need skills such as language or legal or financial. As a family, decide on one way to offer service to one of these places.
5. Spend time together eating as a family, playing as a family, and praying as a family.
6. Seek out stories of hope at church, in the newspaper, on the internet, at school, at work, at home. Tell these stories to others.

Signed by: _____

ALL FAMILY MEMBERS SIGN THE COVENANT.



CHRISTIAN HOME MONTH PLANNING CALENDAR

2012

APRIL: Because Easter is April 8, wait until after that date to 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 living hopefully. Use these to create a bulletin board and put in the church newsletter and bulletin. Celebrate Earth Day. Discuss ways to bring hope to the earth by caring for the environment.

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. Since this is Pentecost, have a “wear red” day and recognize those in the congregation who model the presence of God. Host a workshop on family friendly computer sites.

JUNE: 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 help the homeless or hungry in your community. Recruit a leader and set up an intergenerational study using the book, *Let the Children Give* by Delia Halverson (available from Cokesbury).

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 to buy supplies for their children. Have a “Blessing of the Backpacks” as part of one worship service before school begins.

SEPTEMBER: Hold a parenting class on *Parents and Grandparents as Spiritual Guides* by Betty Shannon Cloyd (available from Cokesbury) to help parents and grandparents reflect on their spiritual lives and how they guide their children.

OCTOBER: Celebrate Children’s Sabbath on the second Sunday of October. Call the Office of Children’s Ministries, General Board of Discipleship 1-877-899-2780, ext. 1760 for instructions on how to get resources. Sponsor a “trunk or treat” in your community. Invite church members to decorate their cars, park in the church parking lot, and distribute treats from their car trunks.

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.

DECEMBER: 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.

2013

JANUARY: If you haven’t yet used the Covenant of Hope, invite families to do so as a New Year Resolution. Publish a list of “beat the winter doldrums” ideas. Include such ideas as playing a board game with the family; telling one another stories of ancestors; having a star-gazing night; picking a favorite Bible story and acting it out.

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 the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday, remembering that with Ash Wednesday we begin Lent and a time of study and self-denial.

MARCH: Easter is March 31. Publish ideas for celebrating Holy Week Easter in

the home. Include prayers, meditations, and activities that help focus on Jesus’ resurrection. Begin plans for celebrating Christian Home Month in May. Call the Office of Family Ministries, General Board of Discipleship (1-877-899-2780, ext. 7170) and request any new resources available for support of family ministries.

APRIL: Continue planning for Christian Home Month in May. Welcome Spring. Hold a Family Work Day at church. Invite those of all ages to come and clean areas of the church that might not have been cleaned for awhile. Sort through toys and supplies removing those that are broken or no longer useable.

RESOURCES THAT SUPPORT MINISTRIES WITH FAMILIES

The Christian Home Month Resource, published annually by The General Board of Discipleship is a manual designed for use by leaders with families. Mailed to every congregation, copies are also available by contacting:

Family Ministries Office
General Board of Discipleship
P.O. Box 340003
Nashville, TN 37203-0003
Phone 615-340-7170
Fax: 615-340-7011
E-Mail: mnorton@gbod.org

Additional resources, ideas, and suggestions for Christian Home Month 2012 can be found online at <http://tinyurl.com/24clyku>. Watch the Family Ministries web page each month for articles, events, and resources to support the family.

CALLED TO HOPE: 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-newsletters, worship bulletins, bulletin boards, and other avenues in the congregation. Regular notices, with sign-up forms, should appear beginning six months prior to the retreat and leading up to the week prior to the retreat.

5. **The team collects the following supplies:** Hymnals or song sheets; *Bibles*; *Circles of Hope* or another children's book on hope; board games, sports equipment, camera(s); one poster board per small group, magazines, scissors, glue, modeling clay or play dough for each small group, one large paper bag for each small group containing 3 sheets of construction paper, a roll of masking tape, 6 markers, a skein of yarn, scissors, 4 paper plates, and 6 plastic cups.

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. Teach the group “Hymn of Promise” (#707 in *The United Methodist Hymnal*)

7:30 – 8:30 p.m. **Divide participants into “family” groups of 4-6** (mixing up actual family members with others in the congregation). Ask each group to create a poster of a hopeful community, either drawing what they feel needs to be included or using pictures and illustrations from the magazines provided.

Ask each group to then decide on the 3 most essential features that must be present in a community for it to be a hopeful place to live. Ask each group to talk about their community, including what they decided were essential for hopeful living.

8:30 – 9:00 p.m. **Read a children's book that speaks of hope.**

One possibility is *Circles of Hope* by Karen Lynn Williams, illustrated by Linda Saport (Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, 2005). This is a story of a boy struggling to grow a tree as a gift for his baby sister. Lead the group in a time of prayer, sharing joys and concerns, and singing together.

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. If the setting allows, have a campfire or take a flashlight walk.

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 for each group. Distribute the paper sacks with the items prepared in them. Ask them to turn to Matthew 25 and read verses 1-6. This is the story of the ten bridesmaids. Divide the teams so that half are to think about the story as the 5 who were wise and the other half as the 5 who were foolish. Ask each team to portray either the 5 foolish or the 5 wise bridesmaids, making up a skit to illustrate how what they did was living with hope or not. Advise each group to talk through what they will do and what they see as hopeful in their situation before moving into simply thinking of the skit.

10:30 – 11:00 a.m. **Break**

11:00 – 11:45 a.m. **Ask each group to present their skits.** After each skit, ask the group to name what was hopeful and what was not in each situation. Announce that during the evening session the group will finish the passage of scripture.

12:00 – 1:00 p.m. **Lunch**

1:00 – 5:30 p.m. **Afternoon Fun.** Encourage naps. Provide walking/hiking trails maps, recreational/sports equipment, arts and crafts.

5:30 – 6:30 p.m. **Dinner**

6:30 – 7:30 p.m. **Ask the participants to reassemble in their “family groups.”** Distribute Bibles. Ask each group to read Matthew 25:6-13. Ask the groups to stay with the 5 bridesmaids they portrayed earlier in the day. Distribute to each group play dough or clay. Invite each group to create a symbol of their group of bridesmaids. Invite each group to reflect on how or how not their group lived out hope.

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7:30 – 8:15 p.m. **Gather the group together** and allow each family group to share the symbol they have created and share their thoughts.

8:15 – 8:30 p.m. **Break**

8:30 – 9:00 p.m. **Lead the group in sharing and praying about their joys and concerns.** Sing again “The Hymn of Promise.” Ask those who wish to name another song, or a scripture verse, or something they have seen this day that brought them hope.

9:00 – 10:00 p.m. **Snack and Game Times.** Recruit volunteers to plan the ending worship service for Sunday. If weather permits, go outside for star gazing or a campfire.

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 HOPE: 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 hope.

Collect stories from families of experiences they have related to living hopefully and publish these (with their permission) in your church newsletter or e-newsletter.

Enjoy a meal together at church. Ask table groups to create a poster of pictures, phrases and symbols using the following phrase on the poster board: “Church Makes Me Hopeful Because....” Display the posters in your church.

Encourage families to adopt the Family Covenant for Hopeful Living and carry out the practices for at least a month. In worship, pray for those who commit to the covenant, and recognize the fulfillment of their commitment at the end of the month with a prayer of thanks.