American Baptist Churches
WORLD RELIEF OFFICE
1003 W. 9th Ave, Suite A
King of Prussia, PA 19406

2021 OFFERING

One Great HOUR OF SHARING

Promotional Materials Enclosed

www.abc-oghs.org

"Nobody hungry, nobody thirsty,
shade from the sun, shelter from the wind,
For the Compassionate One guides them,
takes them to the best springs."
- Isaiah 49:10

One Great HOUR OF SHARING

american baptist churches usa

2021 OFFERING

Planning and Resource Guide

Let love flow.

Update on COVID-19 Response — page 2

photo by Craig Thompson

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One Great HOUR OF SHARING

Let Love Flow

A Letter from Your World Relief Officer

**"Nobody hungry, nobody thirsty,
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- Isaiah 49:10

Dear American Baptist Leaders,

The year 2020 was unlike any year we have witnessed in our lifetime. Record-breaking fires on the west coast of the U.S. devastated communities and burned millions of acres. An extremely active hurricane season brought destruction to the Gulf Coast and Central America. A massive explosion in Beirut displaced thousands of individuals. All these events happened in the midst of the prolonged COVID-19 global pandemic. We are living in a time of uncertainty. And yet, even with so much that is unclear about the future, one thing is certain: through this ministry of One Great Hour of Sharing, you continue to Let Love Flow.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted every area of our personal and communal lives. In the same way, it also touched every area of the work of One Great Hour of Sharing: sustainable development, disaster relief, and refugee support. With so many in need, your compassion is more important than ever.

We have carried into 2021 many of the same challenges. Disasters will continue to occur. Displaced populations remain vulnerable. And hundreds of millions of people around the world struggle under the weight of poverty. Thanks to your faithfulness and generosity, One Great Hour of Sharing will continue to respond.

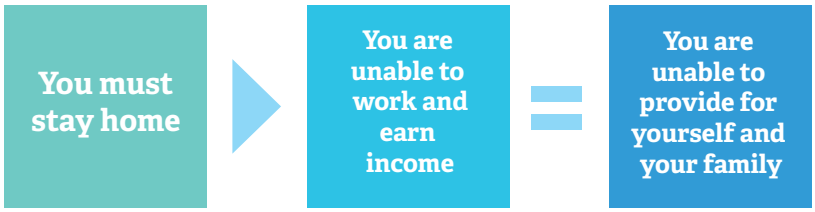
Events of the past year have shown us that, even in times when we cannot be physically together in one place, our offerings to support One Great Hour of Sharing continue to strengthen our church's presence all over the world: providing water to the thirsty, food for the hungry, and hope for the weary. When you give to One Great Hour of Sharing, you "Let Love Flow." Your generosity ensures that the transforming power of love continues to change the world.

In grateful partnership,

Lisa Rothenberger-Winter
World Relief Officer

Special Report on COVID-19 Relief

For Americans, COVID-19 has been an unprecedented disruption to life as we have known it. For many, it has been devastatingly life-changing, as loved ones succumb to the deadly virus. We have lived the hardships and can relate to the struggles of others all around the world. We have come to understand the equation:



In the midst of an unprecedented year, American Baptists should celebrate that their gifts to One Great Hour of Sharing provided COVID-19 relief grants to many corners of our country—and the world!

COVID-19 Relief Response By the Numbers

A total of **191** grants
Totaling **$537,826**
Provided to **113** partners
Located in **28** states and **41** countries

*You did indeed **Let Love Flow** all around the world!*

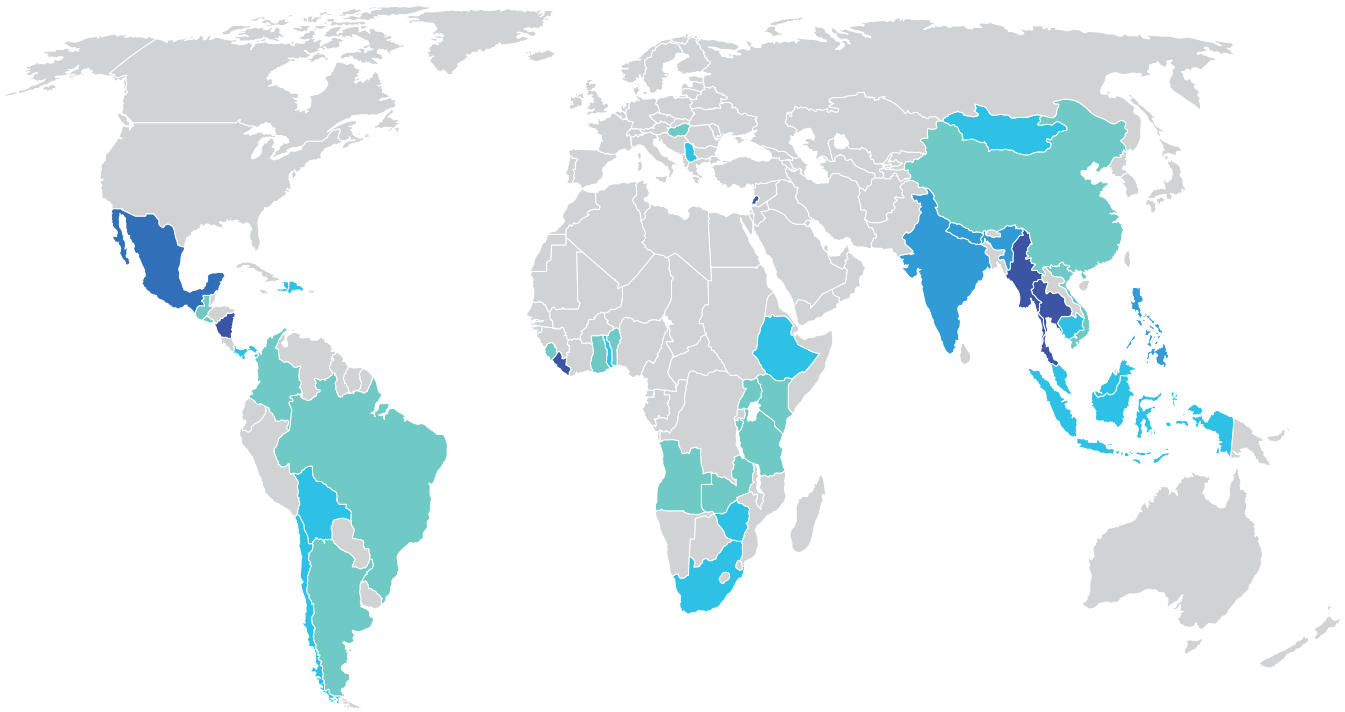
The challenges of COVID-19 are not yet behind us. For many, the emotional and financial impact of COVID-19 will weigh heavy on hearts and in homes for months, and even years, to come. As you give to One Great Hour of Sharing this year, remember your generosity of the past and prayerfully consider how God is calling you to respond this year.

With continued prayers for your safety and wellbeing,

Lisa Rothenberger-Winter
World Relief Officer

Around the World in 41 Countries

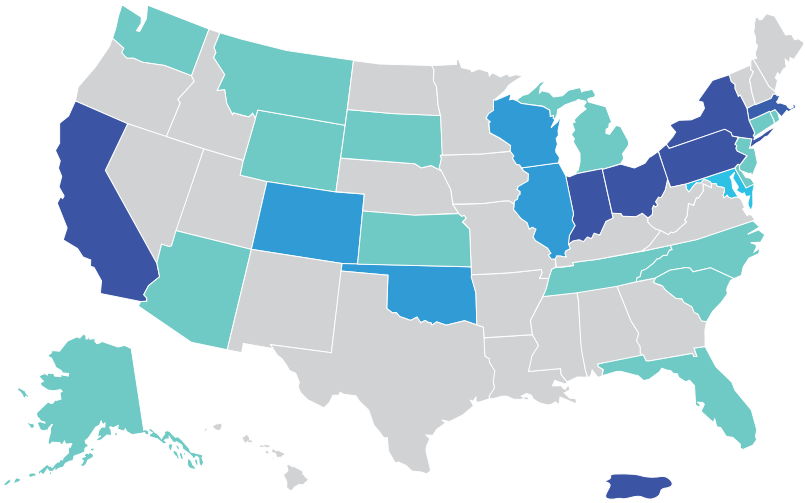
91 Grants provided for a total of $262,500*



- 1 Grant
- 2 Grants
- 3 Grants
- 4 Grants
- >5 Grants

Here at Home in 28 States

100 Grants provided for a total of $275,326*

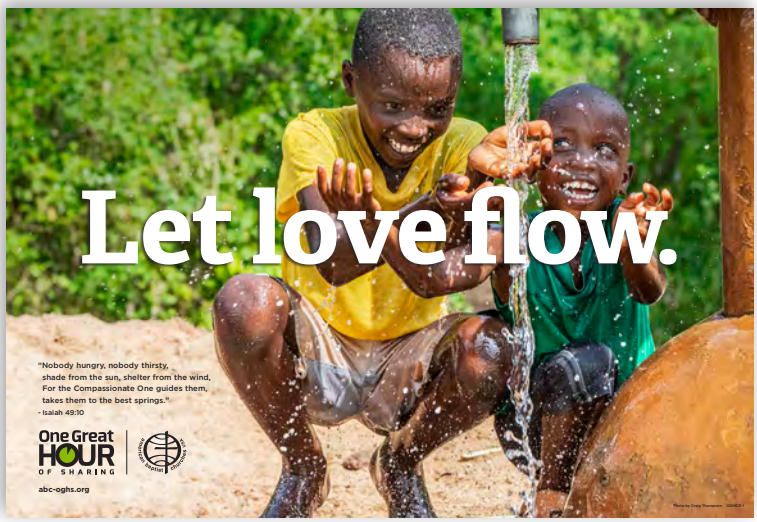


*as of February 25, 2021

Guide to Your Promotional Materials

Your box of resources includes the following items.

If you need additional quantities, call Claudia Wong at 610-768-2304.



2021 Planning and Resource Guide

Inside you will find great content to help you promote the offering. Each page is perforated to be removed and distributed to those who can help build enthusiasm for the offering—the pastor, worship team, teachers, etc.

Video

There are 6 videos available this year to assist in the promotion of One Great Hour of Sharing.

To download the videos, visit *http://abc-oghs.org/resources/media-videos.*

—Five of the videos were filmed on location in Kenya. All five are different versions of the same theme "Let Love Flow." The videos have runs times that range from 1:07 to 2:19. Pick the ones that work best for your congregation.

—The sixth video is based on the theme "You Can't Hide Love." Check it out! The run time is 1:24.

One Great Hour of Sharing Poster (available in English and Spanish)

Create a prominent display with the poster. Call attention to the poster each week through announcements in worship and Sunday school hours and in newsletters.

Printed Bulletin Insert

Use this fold-over bulletin insert as an educational resource in worship, in your newsletter, and at meals and meetings.

Offering Envelopes (available in English & Spanish)

Distribute envelopes generously. Include them in a letter from your pastor to all members and friends, in pews and Sunday bulletins. Put envelopes in several places to make it easy for people to give when it is most convenient.

Coin Boxes

Children and adults can use them. More than simply coin boxes, use the boxes to collect folded paper money and even checks! Announce the date when offering boxes should be returned and dedicate the monies received during Sunday school or worship.

Promotion Checklist

Thanks for saying "Yes!" to coordinating the One Great Hour of Sharing offering for your congregation.

Here are some tips that we hope are helpful to you.

PREPARE! (During April)

Review all promotion resources; order additional quantities if needed by calling Claudia Wong at 610-768-2304.

- ☐ Involve others! Share the individual resources found in the 2021 Planning and Resource Guide with the pastor, the worship team, teachers, etc. as appropriate.
- ☐ Choose a leadership team if you need one.
- ☐ With your leadership team, set a realistic, but challenging, offering goal. Challenge your congregation to reflect on Isaiah 49: 8-12.
- ☐ Set a date(s) when you will receive the offering. Put this date on your church calendar.
- ☐ Be creative! Plan promotional activities to involve people of all ages. Ask teachers to use the materials in the weeks leading up to the offering.
- ☐ Familiarize yourself with each of the promotional pieces:
  - 2021 Planning and Resource Guide
  - 6 New Videos – to download visit *http://abc-oghs.org/resources/media-videos*
  - Poster
  - Printed bulletin inserts
  - Offering coin boxes
  - Offering envelopes

EDUCATE AND PROCLAIM! (During May)

- ☐ Know what the offering is and what it provides. Yes, OGHS is a tangible way American Baptists provide for the human needs of our world. The offering provides:
  - ***Emergency relief*** available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for urgent or acute needs brought about by disasters of natural or human origin;
  - ***Development projects*** focused on meeting chronic human need by enabling individuals or groups to establish or maintain a more adequate quality of life; and
  - ***Refugee and immigration ministries*** focused on holistic ministry to immigrants, refugees, and migrants in detention facilities and refugee camps.
- ☐ Include announcements and mission stories in your newsletter.
- ☐ Make sure offering envelopes are in the pew racks each week.
- ☐ Display the offering poster in a prominent place. Set up a visual display to track the offering. Update your display each week.
- ☐ Enclose bulletin inserts in weekly bulletins. Create additional bulletin inserts by photocopying the Mission Stories found in this guide.
- ☐ Distribute coin boxes to children or the entire congregation.

Continued on next page

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WORSHIP! (During June)

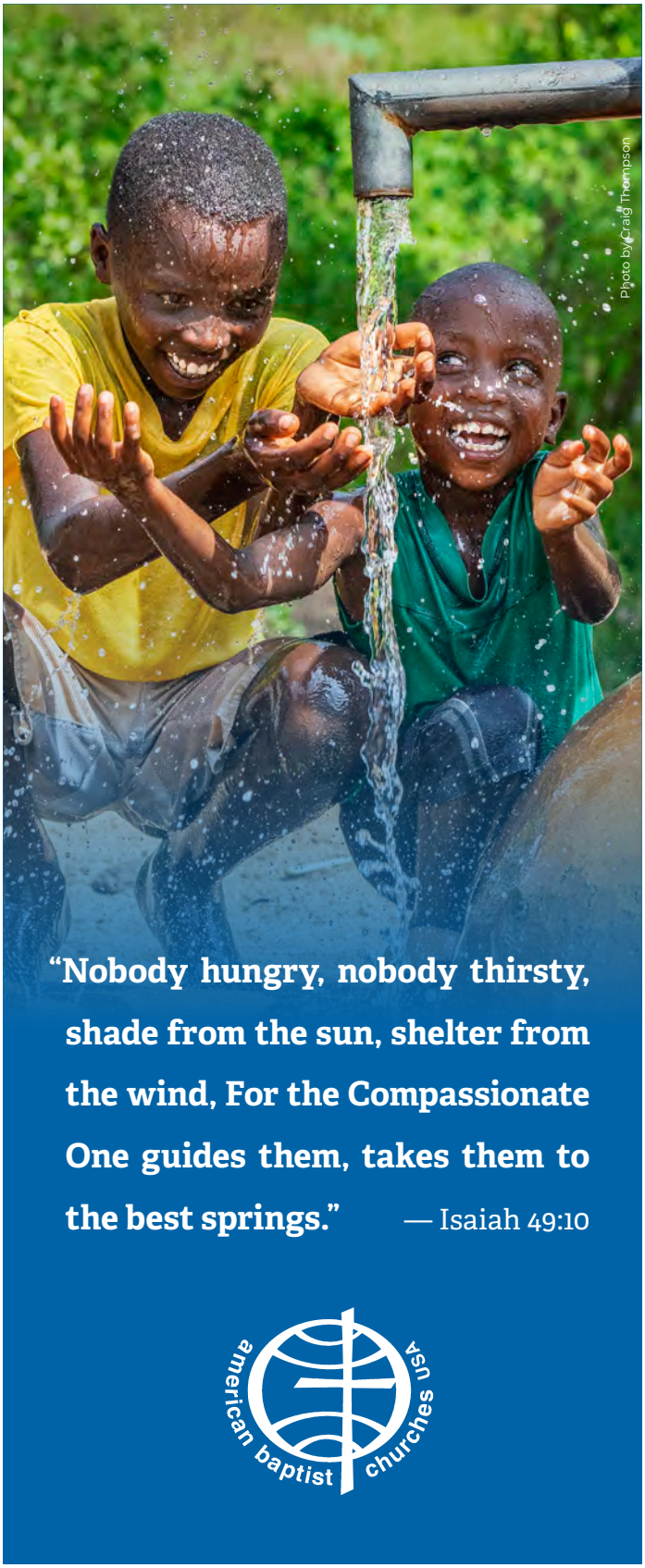
- ☐ Personalize the offering with a testimony from a church member or guest about why giving to this offering is important to them. Many people have been personally impacted by COVID-19 or know family, friends or relatives who were impacted by the many recent natural disasters–hurricanes, fires, mudslides, etc. Others have personal testimonies about helping to resettle refugees in their community–invite them to share.
- ☐ Read Mission Stories during worship services as "Mission Moments."
- ☐ Have a One Great Hour of Sharing sermon and children's chat prior to the week you receive the offering.
- ☐ Use the worship resources during worship services and in small groups.

CELEBRATE! (During June)

- ☐ Announce to the congregation the final result of their gifts and celebrate their generosity. Offer thanks and announce the gift total in your newsletter and worship bulletin. (If you did not meet your goal, celebrate what you have received and announce that you have set aside one or two more Sundays for people to give.)

FOLLOW-UP

- ☐ Keep a record of promotional activities and what worked well for your church. Archive resources for future years.
- ☐ **Forward offering receipts to either your Regional Office or the ABC Mission Center, P.O. Box 851, Valley Forge, PA 19482.**



MISSION STORIES

**"Nobody hungry, nobody thirsty,
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One Great HOUR OF SHARING

LET LOVE FLOW IN GUATEMALA

Water. It is so much a part of our daily life; at times we hardly think about the ease with which we access it. In 2020, COVID-19 reminded us of one of the many reasons water is so important—to enable us to wash our hands frequently. There are so many other reasons we need water—to drink, to prepare food, to do laundry, and to use the bathroom. Water—or the lack of it—plays a pivotal role in a community's health and welfare.

There are many communities around the world for which access to clean water remains a luxury. The village of Volcancito in Guatemala was one. Despite repeated requests to the local municipality, a system to provide water to homes and the school remained out of reach. The community had already held reforestation days, planting over 140,000 plants to counteract the deforestation that has taken place from increased logging activity in the area. In addition, a large-scale silver mining project has left the groundwater contaminated

Community members with the new tanks that store the rainwater.

MISSION STORIES

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One Great HOUR OF SHARING

LET LOVE FLOW IN PUERTO RICO

Iglesia Bautista Luz del Mundo Inc. (Light of the World Baptist Church) is a small church in Trujillo Alto, a suburb southeast of Puerto Rico's capital city, San Juan. The area is mostly mountainous and rural, consisting of marginalized communities with a high poverty rate. When COVID-19 hit the island, members of the church came together and started a program to reach out to people in their community who were most vulnerable and at risk for infection. The focus of the ministry was to provide the elderly with hygiene-and-protection kits that would help keep them safe during the pandemic.

Inspired by the story of Dorcas in Acts 7:36-39, a group of seamstresses from the church and the community wanted to use their talents to bless and help others. They called themselves "The Dorcas Seamstresses" and together sewed 200 reusable cloth masks for distribution with the hygiene-and-protection kits.

A recipient of a COVID-19 hygiene and protection kit.

The Missions Committee

American Baptist Churches • World Relief Office • 1003 W. 9th Ave, Suite A, King of Prussia, PA 19406

assembled 200 kits. With a grant from One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) and donations from members of the church and community, items for each kit were purchased: one cloth mask, three surgical masks, rubbing alcohol, hand sanitizer, soap, and a pair of gloves.

The church faced many challenges in assembling the kits. Because of the pandemic, acquiring materials for the hygiene kits was difficult. Most stores did not have large quantities of the items for sale, so many stores had to be visited. Social-distancing guidelines needed to be followed in assembling the kits and while delivering them to the elderly.

"Everything went little by little," said the Rev. Lydia Rivas Balado, pastor, Iglesia Bautista Luz del Mundo. But the group persevered and was not discouraged by the slow progress.

The elderly were extremely grateful for the visits and the hygiene-and-protection kits they received. "When we visited their homes, they said such things as, "The Lord is good because with your visit we have been blessed," "Nobody has ever brought us protection items for our personal use" and "You always care about others," reported Altita Ruíz, president, Ministry of Social Action and Charity Board.

"It was hard, but we thank God for his care, safety and joy for serving others," said Rev. Rivas Balado. "We praise the Lord because he is good! Thanks to your donation, we were able to reach 200 individuals over age 65 with hygiene-and-protection kits in pandemic time in order to bring hope."

One Great HOUR OF SHARING

www.abc-oghs.org

with arsenic and heavy metals. When the water from the springs is contaminated, and the amount of water in those springs is limited because of deforestation, where do you look? To the skies—for the rainwater. But the village lacked a system to harvest the water when the rains came—especially important during the long dry periods in the summer.

How do you harvest rainwater?
1. It rains.
2. The rainwater is collected from roof-like surfaces.
3. The water is stored in tanks for future use.

In 2020 the community was introduced to the Water for All project designed and led by International Ministries' Global Servants Rev. Ricardo Mayol-Bracero and Rev. Dwight Bolick. Water for All is about rainwater harvesting and so much more. The project seeks to use the strengths of the community to learn about the care and best use of freshwater supplies. Techniques of rainwater harvesting are explored in a participatory way to arrive at what will work best for the community.

A year later, life in Volcancito has indeed changed—for the better! At the school, four large tanks collect up to 2600 gallons when the rains come. The water is stored to provide for the school's bathroom and kitchen—enabling 70 students and their 3 teachers to study at the school. The water used to prepare the daily lunch is recycled and used to flush toilets. The new rainwater harvesting system is working so well, the rainwater collected at times overflows from the tanks!

One Great Hour of Sharing has indeed Let Love Flow at the school in Volcancito. But the love won't stop there. The system used at the school now serves as a model for the 60 homes in the community as they seek to meet their own basic needs for hygiene and water for their homes.

One Great HOUR OF SHARING

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Meet Your World Relief Committee

Have you ever wondered how the gifts that you give to the One Great Hour of Sharing offering get to the places where they make a difference? This is the responsibility of the World Relief Committee (WRC or "Committee"). The Committee's purpose is to support, enable and encourage emergency relief, refugee work, disaster rehabilitation, and development assistance. The source of funds for this work is the gifts you give to the One Great Hour of Sharing annual offering.

The WRC is made up of people from different parts of our American Baptist life:

- 7 voting members elected as follows:
  - 2 from the Board of Directors of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society;
  - 2 from the Board of Directors of the American Baptist Home Mission Societies;
  - 2 from the Board of General Ministries; and
  - 1 from the Executive Committee of the American Baptist Women's Ministries.
- 3 staff members: a representative each from the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society, the American Baptist Home Mission Societies, and the American Baptist Churches USA.
- The World Relief Officer serves as staff to the committee.

Although only the voting members vote on final decisions, all members have the opportunity to give input on each of the project requests prior to the decision being made.

The Committee meets face-to-face two days a year to consider development project proposals. Each individual project proposal is submitted via a completed application that is presented by the appropriate staff representative and then considered by the committee. A formal vote is taken on each project, and the approval process is followed by a time of prayer for the partners who will receive the funding and for the people whose lives will be made better in some way by the project.

The committee also receives and reviews the annual financial report of the income and use of all One Great Hour of Sharing monies.

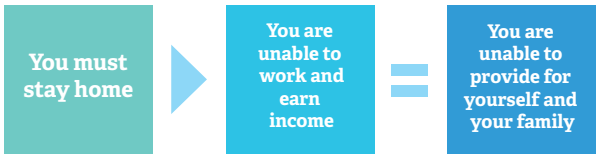
Your committee members are as follows:

Rev. Dr. Zina Jacque (Chair), Buffalo Grove, IL
Rev. Mia Chang, Princeton Junction, NJ
Rev. Corey Fields, Wilmington, DE
Mrs. Janice Fletcher, North Kingstown, RI
Rev. Ivan Greuter, Topeka, KS
Rev. Barry Moultrie, Rockville, MD
Ms. M. Joanne Strauss, Tuckahoe, NY

Where Your Gifts Made a Difference

2020

When you take a global view of our world, natural disasters occur every week. When you add a pandemic, a slow-moving disaster continues to fester each day. We continue to live through the restrictions and changes to daily life that are necessitated by COVID-19, and we have recognized anew our vulnerabilities. We have witnessed lines for food assistance in the U.S. that far exceeds the norm. Similarly, we have witnessed lines for COVID-19 testing and vaccination unlike any other time. We have seen unemployment in the U.S. and Puerto Rico soar, and come to understand this equation:



This equation plays out in different ways around the world depending upon the support systems that are part of the culture. But there is one constant: the local church. It is the local church that is there before, during and after a disaster, large or small. It is the local church embedded in the community that is often best able to respond. And it is the local church through which many One Great Hour of Sharing grants for COVID-19 relief were given. In some situations, the need was for food. In others money to help pay for housing. And in others, money to provide basic sanitation supplies and PPE.

To date, One Great Hour of Sharing has provided over $537,000 in emergency COVID-19 grants to churches and partners in the U.S. and Puerto Rico and around the world. These grants are a pouring out of your love to communities in need–they have indeed "Let Love Flow"–literally all around the world!

In addition to COVID-19 emergency grants, the following grants were also provided in response to other emergency situations.

AROUND THE WORLD

COUNTRY	SITUATION CALLING FOR A RESPONSE
Bahamas	Hurricane Dorian
Honduras	Ministries of Faith and New Life – Hurricane Relief
Japan	Morigo Camp – Landslide Relief
Kenya	KOPAD – Civil Unrest on Uganda/ South Sudan Border
Nicaragua	CEPAD – Hurricane Relief
Nicaragua	Nicaragua Baptist Convention – Hurricane Relief
Philippines	Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches – Typhoon Relief

HERE AT HOME

STATE	SITUATION CALLING FOR A RESPONSE
California	Camp Redwood Glen, Loma Mar – Wildfire Relief
Louisiana	Greater St. Mary Community Development Foundation, Lake Charles – Hurricane Delta and Laura Relief
North Carolina	Baptist Peace Fellowship, Charlotte – Flood Relief
Oregon	Riverview Retreat – Fire Relief
Oregon	First Baptist Church – Fire Relief
Puerto Rico	Iglesia Bautista de Puerto Rico, San Juan – Earthquake Relief
Tennessee	New Covenant Christian Church, Nashville – Tornado Relief
Texas	Iglesia Cristiana Hispana Americana, Orange – Hurricane Laura Relief
West Virginia	American Baptist Men, Parkersburg – Hurricane Laura Response

In addition to emergency relief, One Great Hour of Sharing also provided funds for development projects — projects which address chronic needs — in the following countries and states listed below and highlighted on the next page.

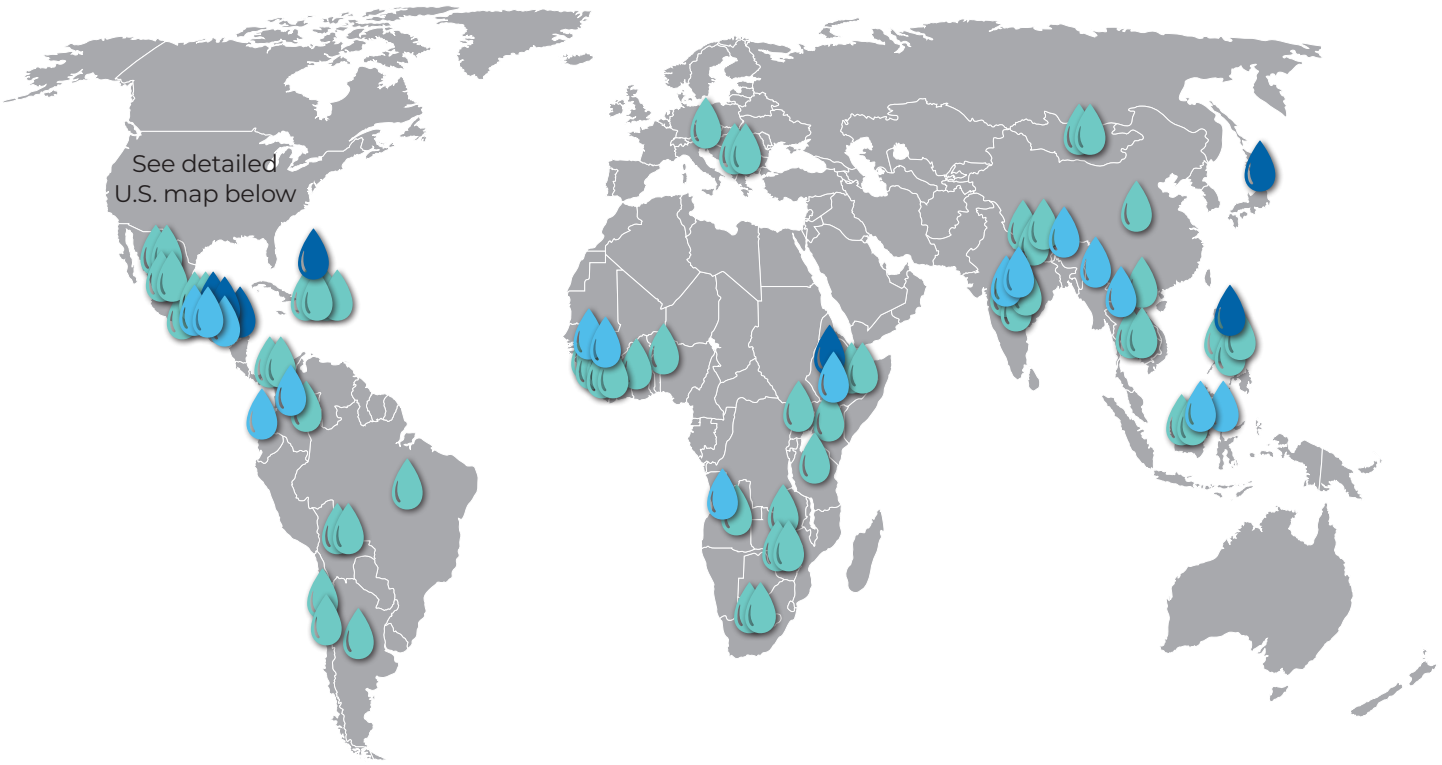
AROUND THE WORLD

COUNTRY	DEVELOPMENT PROJECT
Angola	Igreja Baptista Livre Em Angola (IBLA) – Agricultural Project
Bangladesh	Symbiosis – Safe Birthing Project
El Salvador, Guatemala, and Nicaragua	Various Partners – Water for All
Colombia	Fundacion SEPAZ – Accompaniment of Venezuelan Migrants
Ecuador	Iglesias Bautistas Pichincha Ecuador & Seminario Teologico Bautista – Accompaniment of Venezuelan Migrants
India	North East Christian University – Boy's Hostel
India	Vellore Christian Medical College Foundation – Jawadhi Hospital
Kenya	PHARP – Conflict Training in Kibera Slum
Liberia	Liberia Tribal Baptist Convention – Zangar Town School Construction Project
Liberia	Liberia Direct Baptist Missionary Conference – Antioch Baptist School Building Project
Malaysia	Coalition of Burma Ethnics Malaysia – Youth Program
Malaysia	Myanmar Ethnic Women Refugees Organization – Safe Space Learning Center
Myanmar	Mekong Minority Foundation – Community Health Project in Eastern Shan State
Thailand	NightLight International – Trafficked Women's Assistance Program

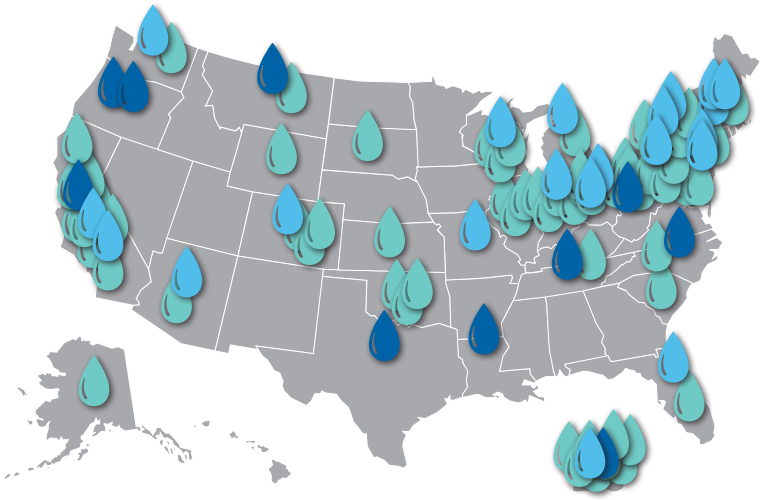
HERE AT HOME

STATE	DEVELOPMENT PROJECT
Arizona	Monte Vista Cross Cultural Church, Phoenix – Refugee and Immigration Ministry Grant
California	Grace Solutions Homeless Shelter, San Jose – Food and Shelter Grant
California	First Baptist Church, Maywood – Refugee and Immigration Ministry Grant
Colorado	First Baptist Church, Denver – Food and Shelter Grant
Connecticut	ABC Creation Justice Network – Growing the Congregational Network
Florida	Mt. Olive Development Corp., Fort Lauderdale – Food and Shelter Grant
Indiana	Iglesia Bautista Betesda, Indianapolis – Refugee and Immigration Ministry Grant
Indiana	Hope for Tomorrow, Indianapolis – Refugee and Immigration Ministry Grant
Massachusetts	First Baptist Church, Jamaica Plain – Food and Shelter Grant
Massachusetts	Massachusetts Baptist Multicultural Ministries, Lexington – Refugee and Immigration Ministry Grant
Michigan	Detroit Friendship House, Hamtramck – Food and Shelter Grant
Missouri	Pathways to Promise, St. Louis – Creating a Community of Care through Companionship
New Jersey	Stelton Baptist Church, Edison – Church Van
New Jersey	NextGen Church, West Windsor – Capital City Academy
New York	Cameron Community Ministries, Rochester – Food and Shelter Grant
New York	First Baptist Church, Painted Post – Food and Shelter Grant
Ohio	Bondage Breakers, Akron – Support for Families of the Incarcerated
Ohio	Affinity Baptist Church, Cleveland – Food and Shelter Grant
Pennsylvania	The Green Church, Glen Mills – Food and Shelter Grant
Puerto Rico	Primera Iglesia Bautista de Dorado, Dorado – Food and Shelter Grant
Washington	Queen Ann Baptist Church, Seattle – Food and Shelter Grant
Wisconsin	Green Lake Conference Center, Green Lake – Quest Program

AROUND THE WORLD



HERE AT HOME



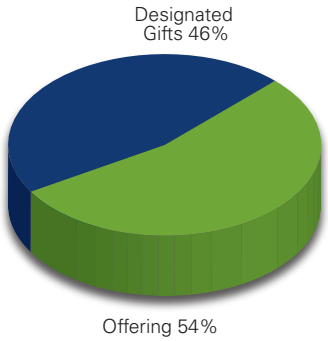
Covid Relief grants:

Development grants:

Emergency Relief grants:

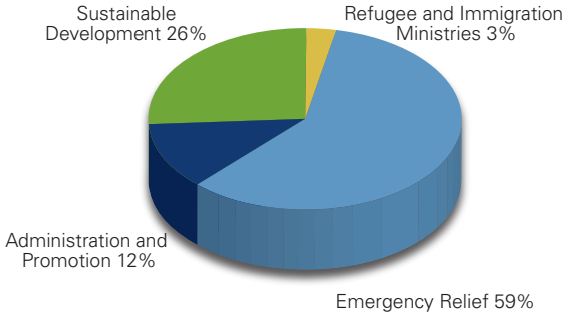
2020 One Great Hour of Sharing Financial Report

How you "Let Love Flow" in 2020.



OGHS giving from churches and individuals

Offering	$	783,164
Designated Gifts	$	659,429
Total		**$1,442,593**



Changing lives through the offering

Emergency Relief	$	911,736
Refugee and Immigration Ministries	$	47,500
Sustainable Development	$	395,000
Administration and Promotion	$	187,057
Total		**$1,541,293**

DID YOU KNOW?

This offering began seventy-two years ago in response to the devastation of World War II. In March 1949, a national broadcast on a Saturday evening asked Americans to give generously the next morning in their churches. A remarkable assembly of national leaders and celebrities gave their efforts to the broadcast, and more than 75,000 churches responded the next day.

Today, One Great Hour of Sharing serves people in over 80 countries around the world. Sponsored by eight Christian U.S. denominations and Church World Service, One Great Hour of Sharing makes sure that we can respond to needs as soon as they happen and that tens of thousands of people receive support for ongoing relief, rehabilitation, and development.

The World Relief Committee of the American Baptist Board of General Ministries reviews each development project request funded by the One Great Hour of Sharing offering received from American Baptists. Gifts reach the ministries and people in need through a network of regional and international partnerships with the following:

American Baptist Foreign Mission Society

American Baptist Home Mission Societies

Baptist World Aid – the compassionate arm of the Baptist World Alliance, supporting three areas of ministry: relief, development, and support of national partners.

Church World Service – Founded in 1946, Church World Service is a relief, development, and refugee assistance ministry supported by 36 Protestant, Orthodox, and Anglican denominations in the United States. Church World Service transforms communities around the globe through just and sustainable responses to hunger, poverty, displacement and disaster.

For a complete listing of how gifts were disbursed in 2020, call or e-mail Lisa Rothenberger-Winter, World Relief Officer. 610-768-2156; lisa.rothenberger @internationalminstries.org. Figures are unaudited.

Scripture:
Let Love Flow

SCRIPTURE **ISAIAH 49:8-12**

The Message translation

God also says:
"When the time's ripe, I answer you.
When victory's due, I help you.
I form you and use you
to reconnect the people with me,
To put the land in order,
to resettle families on the ruined properties.
I tell prisoners, 'Come on out. You're free!'
and those huddled in fear, 'It's all right. It's safe now.'
There'll be foodstands along all the roads,
picnics on all the hills—
Nobody hungry, nobody thirsty,
shade from the sun, shelter from the wind,
For the Compassionate One guides them,
takes them to the best springs.
I'll make all my mountains into roads,
turn them into a superhighway.
Look: These coming from far countries,
and those, out of the north,
These streaming in from the west,
and those from all the way down the Nile!"

New Revised Standard Version

Thus says the LORD:
In a time of favor I have answered you,
on a day of salvation I have helped you;
I have kept you and given you
as a covenant to the people,[a]
to establish the land,
to apportion the desolate heritages;
saying to the prisoners, "Come out,"
to those who are in darkness, "Show yourselves."
They shall feed along the ways,
on all the bare heights[b] shall be their pasture;
they shall not hunger or thirst,
neither scorching wind nor sun shall strike them down,
for he who has pity on them will lead them,
and by springs of water will guide them.
And I will turn all my mountains into a road,
and my highways shall be raised up.
Lo, these shall come from far away,
and lo, these from the north and from the west,
and these from the land of Syene.

Photo by Craig Thompson

Theme Interpretation:
Let Love Flow

During the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, it became clear that many of the western world constructs intended to create a sense of safety had also created a false sense of security. In a global crisis, we were faced with a danger that defied our usual protective hedges. While some were made more vulnerable by economic and geographical factors, everyone was affected by the virus.

As it turns out, lines on a map do not stop the spread of disease; a pandemic does not recognize human-made boundaries. Our lives are deeply intertwined. Our well-being is bound, inextricably, to that of neighbors close by, and those halfway around the world. When we recognize our human codependency, we are better able to *let love flow*— generously and indiscriminately— to those who need it most.

When water comes to a village, everything changes. It touches every area of life—literally and figuratively! Having clean water close by means that when women in Nicaragua don't have to spend their whole day walking to the source, they might have other opportunities for learning or vocational growth. Children in Kenya no longer spend their days carrying heavy buckets, but instead they can go to school. Improved sanitation slows the spread of disease, so there is less preventable illness. Crops thrive in Vietnam, meaning that food security and nutrition improve in the whole community. Families can spend more time together.

Isaiah 49:8-12 articulates a stunning vision for a world of justice and equity; a world where everyone has enough, and all live in safety and abundance. It is also a vision for a world of *interconnectedness*. In this vision, what is good for you is also good for your neighbor; what is good for one country is good for the whole world; and what harms any one of us harms us all.

That Kingdom kind of vision runs through the work that we share in together through One Great Hour of Sharing—much like the stream that runs through Isaiah's Kingdom vision. Human-made constructs of one sort or another too often hinder human thriving, shoring up resources for some while leaving many to suffer. A world built on that sort of imbalance is counter to God's dream for creation. To help bring about that more just, abundant vision for humanity, One Great Hour of Sharing supports projects around the world that create opportunity and empower communities. Through global partnerships, your offerings promote food security; enable health and wellness programs; support education and vocational training; and of course—provide access to clean, safe water.

Water, after all, is life.

In many ways, our world was not prepared for the weight of the COVID-19 pandemic. But because of your past generosity through One Great Hour of Sharing, many communities were better prepared to meet the challenges presented by COVID-19. Through projects that you have supported in the past, more people were equipped for the crisis with improved sanitation, access to clean, safe water for handwashing, and were empowered to prevent the spread of disease among their family and neighbors.

When you continue to give generously, you continue to give life—in the form of water and so much more—to people in need around the world. You continue to build on the dream of a world in which there is no thirst, no hunger, no suffering… just the abundance of life in a living stream.

You aren't just sharing water. When you share what God has given, you "let love flow." That love crosses all sorts of spaces and dividing lines, knitting together a better human story, and bringing the Kingdom of God about in our time.

Nobody hungry, nobody thirsty,

shade from the sun, shelter from the wind,

For the Compassionate One guides them,

takes them to the best springs.

Photo by Craig Thompson

Sermon Starter

Picture your church's mission impact as a stream. Where does it go? What path does it take as you commission members, resources, and the embodied words of the gospel to go out into the world? Whose lives are touched by that stream?

In Isaiah, God says "*I'll make all my mountains into roads, turn them into a superhighway.*" How does the mission stream that flows from your congregation shape the landscape as it makes its path through the world?

The people of Israel found themselves exiles in a strange land when Jerusalem was conquered by Babylon. Now, the Babylonians themselves have been conquered by Persia and Cyrus the Great.[1] The prophet speaks to the people after Babylon has fallen (sometime around 586-539 BCE). On the surface, it is a heavy time of war, poverty, and devastation.

But in spite of that devastation, it is also a time of restoration. This new generation of wanderers might be allowed, finally, to return home; to reclaim their land, rebuild their homes, even restore their Temple. All the while, the prophet assures Israel that their covenant with God has never been broken—even as their structures and institutions crumbled, God remained with the people.

One critical part of that covenant is that ***Israel's responsibilities extend beyond its own people***—God has called them to care more widely for the nations of the earth; to show **compassion** and mercy as an expression of covenant living.[2] This was part of their identity as God's people before the exile and remains true at their core as they move into a season of renewal. Even—maybe especially—in a time of upheaval, they are called to be people who live outside of themselves.

Isaiah 49:10 conveys a powerful vision for creation; it is a vision that will be brought to life by these people of covenant and restoration. To be in covenant means to be "a powerful agent and partner in the practice of loyal solidarity that makes a new future possible.[3]" In this moment, God is inviting them to step into their role as a community that will *let love flow* in new and innovative ways.

Covenant people are those who recognize that love is what we reap—but only if we first sow it. Only if we release it from our grasp, sending it out to transform the world around us. When you give generously through One Great Hour of Sharing, you *let love flow*. You empower families and communities around the world to live healthier, safer, more hope-filled lives. And ultimately, you build a world that honors the interconnectedness of all God's people.

In this time when all of life has been touched by the effects of the pandemic, we are called to be people of restoration; releasing love into the world in new and innovative ways that answer the unique needs of this season. As the body of Christ in the world, the Church of today puts flesh on this vision: a world shaped by love's movement from one place to another.

The Body of Christ today transforms everything it touches—much like the body of water at the heart of Isaiah's vision for humankind. Take your congregation on a journey downstream: maybe with pictures; maybe using visualization; maybe even setting up worship stations to explore different expressions of mission life. Dive into questions—maybe even celebrations—about your collective impact. Start with lives inside your own congregation, then look at your local community. And then, follow that stream all the way to Nicaragua; to Kenya; to Vietnam, and all the other places where your One Great Hour of Sharing gifts are at work.

[1] Hansen, Paul D. *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching Isaiah 40-66*. John Knox Press, Louisville, KY, 1995. Pgs. 1-3

[2] Hansen, Paul D. *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching Isaiah 40-66*. John Knox Press, Louisville, KY, 1995. Pgs. 130-132

[3] Brueggemann, Walter. Isaiah (Westminster Bible Companion) (Volume 2, Chapters 40-66). Fourth Impression, Westminster John Knox Press, 1998. Pgs. 113-114

Children's Moment

THEME:
One Great Hour of Sharing helps "let love flow" by providing clean water via wells. Wells significantly increase the prosperity of a community AND allow for women and children, especially, to participate in education, work outside their home, and rest!

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- An affirming listening ear, eager to engage children's ideas!
- A large bucket with a handle, filled about 1/2 way with rocks or weights OR a large 3–5-gallon jug filled with water and sealed so it won't spill. Total weight should be 33-55 pounds.
- One Great Hour of Sharing coinboxes to pass out.

Constructed to be used in your own words, or to be followed as a script, this children's moment illustrates some of the difficulties that arise from lack of access to clean water. Please adapt for your setting and community. The script and design may be adjusted to fit your virtual or hybrid worship context. You might recruit a family member to record themselves carrying the bucket, or experiment with other creative ways of carrying the bucket away from the camera to show relative distance.

SCRIPT SUGGESTION

Do you know where your water comes from? Yes, of course! For a lot of us it comes from the tap! How many places in your house can you name where you can get clean water?

[Children might answer: bathroom sink, kitchen sink, outdoor hose, bathtub, shower, toilet (eww, but true), refrigerator dispenser, etc.]

Right! And what are some of the things you need all that clean water for? How many can we name?

[Allow time to list all the things clean water is needed for. Highlight the basic needs like cooking, and especially keeping hands clean to prevent disease!]

All of those are really good and important uses of water! How far in your house do you have to walk to get clean water? 10 feet? 30 feet?

[Let the children show you or tell you].

Image by David Greenwood-Haigh from Pixabay

Phew! That's a good thing because we need water for all those things you mentioned! But not everyone has it that easy. Not everyone has a tap. What does a family do if they don't have any clean water in their house?

[Make space for their answers: bottled water, borrow some from a friend, walk until you find some. Affirm each answer.]

All of those are good answers, but in many places in the world, NO ONE in the whole town has water. Every family must send someone to carry water from wherever it can be found, and sometimes that is a LONG WAY. I have got *["water" or "some weights"]* to represent how heavy a full water bucket would be. I wonder if anyone could help me carry it all the way down the aisle and back. This represents about 5 gallons of water. If you were VERY CAREFUL and didn't waste a drop, that might be enough for 4 people each day.

[Invite the children to try to lift the bucket but be very careful not to squash your helpers. Give them all a try at lifting it. Now help them move it down the aisle. If you get tired, enlist some other adults. Have them help carry the heavy bucket even for a few steps. Bring everyone and the bucket back up to the front.]

In many of the places where One Great Hour of Sharing helps people, they have to carry this much water an average of 3.7 MILES every day just to live. Every day!

[Allow time for reactions]

Continued on next page

It takes so much effort that sometimes the whole family has to help, including kids like you. It takes hours! If you are getting water, you can't play. You can't go to school. Your mom or your dad can't work or earn money during that time. The whole family has to put everything on hold. But when we give to One Great Hour of Sharing, we work with communities to help put in a well. Then people only have to walk to the end of the block. It just takes minutes! Some communities even put pipes right to the houses just like yours. That would make a huge difference, wouldn't it? You have carried this bucket and we got tired just walking up and down the aisle here, so you know!

[Ask the adults who helped carry to affirm that they know, too. Next, pass out One Great Hour of Sharing coinboxes to children and families OR arrange for them to be given out at an appropriate time.]

Here is a special bank so you can help "let love flow" in all the places where people need water. At home, I'd like you to think about all the times you use water and how easily it flows. And with your family, maybe each night at dinner, or when you have breakfast, think and pray together about how you want to make a difference. Maybe you want to put in a dollar for every tap you have in your house. Or maybe you want to count all the times you've used water each day and add an amount of money for every time. I bet you can think of a lot of creative ways to help. It's a way of being mindful of all that we have, being grateful, and helping others. And the water does so much more than just keep people from being thirsty! With a well, families can grow food in gardens. With a well, children don't have to walk miles and miles carrying water. They can go to school! Adults can have time to work, or start businesses, or have more time with their children. Everyone benefits when love flows!

[Share any details about when your community will be receiving the offering, and when and how they should return the coinboxes.]

So now that we know how much work it is, can we pray a blessing together on these banks and on the offering we will receive with them? What do we hope God will do?

[Allow for all their prayer requests. They may say "help people get water" or "make people's lives easier." Be prepared for anything, but all prayers are welcome!]

Very good! Let's pray:

[If you are comfortable doing so, incorporate the specific requests and wording offered by the children in your prayer with them. And/Or you may wish to use this prayer:]

Dear Lord, we are feeling grateful that we don't have to carry heavy water long distances. Please help us to help everyone who does. Please help us to let love flow, so that all your people can thrive. This we ask in Jesus name, and everyone says… "AMEN!"

[Encourage the children and adults to participate by saying the last "Amen" together.]

[1] "10 FACTS ON WOMEN AND WATER" https://waterfortheages.org/. In Asia and Africa, the average distance that water must be carried is 3.7 miles, and is borne mostly by women and children. Some distances are much longer, requiring as much as 2 to 3 hours of walking to the source for the water needed for daily food and cleaning.

Order of Worship

CALL TO WORSHIP

One: We are yearning for the day…

All: The day of God's hope made real.
The day when nobody is hungry, nobody thirsty.
The day of God's Love flowing freely.

One: Shade from sun and shelter from the wind,
The Compassionate One guides us to the springs of living water in the Word and in mighty deeds.

All: Let us worship our God and Let Love Flow.

OPENING PRAYER

Source of Love-Made-Flesh, we stream to you from East and West seeking the right and holding on to the holy. Settle us body and soul in the land of hope your prophets proclaimed. Free our hearts and minds to hear anew the call to compassion, the challenge of community, the needs of our neighbors. Call to us that we may gather in Spirit and in Truth and be changed. Seated and settled now, this we pray in Jesus' name: Amen.

PRAYER OF CONFESSION

God of grace and abundance, we confess that we have stored up the blessings meant for all. We have pretended that we have done enough for our neighbors, when still we see their need. For the ways we obstruct the love you would let flow for all, we ask your forgiveness and a new way to live. Transform our hearts so that our actions may follow. Free us from the fear of scarcity and open our hands to heal your people and your land. Set our feet on new paths and guide us to the spring of your grace. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE

One: Friends, believe this good news: nothing can dam the waters of God's love. The Compassionate One guides all those who seek the better way and will shelter us from the winds of recrimination. God's mercy frees us to make our broken places whole, reconnecting us to a higher call and new life. Love flows to us this day, and by God's power we are forgiven!

All: Thanks be God!

PASTORAL PRAYER

You immerse us in healing waters, and we are glad. Guide us to take part in shaping a world where all people know such joy. Let hunger end by the open hands of generous hearts. Let none be thirsty, as your love freely flows through each of your people. Let health be restored to the sick of body, mind, or spirit, and in Jesus' name, let us help. We who have known mercy are a people of mercy, strengthened through you and through your Son, Jesus. With a renewed and holy Spirit, we are joyful; we pledge justice; and we will make peace on all your mountains and plains. May such love flow through all your people, now and always. Amen!

LITANY

Suggestions: For the litany consider using a table-top fountain to provide the sound of living water. A worship leader could also pour water between two pitchers as the congregation responds. If the service will be online or if you can project images in your worship space, this litany is appropriate for use with a series of images beginning with a single drop and proceeding to a large waterfall, river, or ocean. Using photos or videos of bodies of water near and familiar to your congregation will give depth and power to the meditation.

One: Almighty God, your compassion washes over your people. People made in your image, yet weak when alone…

All: Small as drops, but love flows.

One: And like drops your people gather, seeking the way to you: drops make streams…

All: Wearing away the stone to let love flow.

One: Joining in a murmur of praise, the stream unites …

All: In ever-flowing current to let love flow.

One: From the banks of hillside creeks and the streams that irrigate our fields, may our love converge

All: in a mighty river of mercy to let love flow.

One: For this we know: drops alone may dry too soon, but drops together are a flood of love.

All: In this and every hour: Let Love Flow.

OFFERTORY

"Nobody hungry, nobody thirsty" is the hope of God in Isaiah. With the gifts of our hearts, we let love flow, like new well-water to a thirsty village; for crops, for cooking, for life. Let our giving be an upwelling of generosity and may the stream of love bring about God's kin-dom. Our gift is prayer in action. Praise be to God.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION

Holy giver of all good gifts, bless now this offering that great hours of labor have made possible. Bless the drops that become mighty rivers of grace and transformation. Bless the vision of a world transformed. Let a shining river of love flow through us to your waiting world, in Christ's name. Amen.

BENEDICTION

May the Maker of rain and sea, Creator of all, and Giver of life awaken you that you may flourish;
May Jesus, our brother, redeemer of the lost and hope of the poor, call your name to follow in his footsteps;
And may the Holy Spirit flood you with such love, that you fill with joy all who drink from your well. God's peace is for all and is now with you.
Our worship is over: Let our service begin. Amen.

Children's Activity

AT HOME MURAL

A mural is a large picture that shows many things at once. You can use many sheets of paper and tape them together, or you can use a large roll of butcher paper to draw the way One Great of Sharing helps people and lets God's love flow. Here are some things you might want to include in your mural as we think about the blessing of water!

i. The ways people all over the world get water: some have taps in their houses, some get water from wells; others carry it long distances from lakes and streams. How many can you draw?

ii. People helping each other get good water. Can you draw a picture of friends helping to drill a well or putting in taps inside a house? These are all things that One Great Hour of Sharing does to help make God's love for all of us flow everywhere it is needed.

iii. The ways water helps us: watering gardens, washing dishes, baths, cooking food, and many other ways.

iv. God sending rain, making lakes and rivers, and even aquifers (underground water).

When you're finished, share your mural with your church family.

Image by freepik

Youth Activity

KNOW THE FLOW!

How much water does it take to run your household? Let's find out! With your parent or guardian see if you can find a water bill. It will show you the number of gallons or liters your house used last month. Divide that by the number of days in the month. The average U.S. family uses about 300 gallons (1200 liters) per day.[1] How does your family compare?

In many places where One Great of Sharing is helping love to flow, families have to walk more than 3 miles and carry every gallon. Each gallon of water weighs 8.5 pounds. With a friend, see how many pounds you can carry in a backpack. Can you carry 10lbs? 20lbs? Once you think you know, calculate how many trips you would have to make to get your family's daily water usage.

Equation:

300 x 8.5 = 2550 ÷ 10 = 255 trips

Wow! That is a lot of trips, even if other members of your family helped. That's why supporting One Great Hour of Sharing water projects makes such a difference. When we help provide water, people have time for other things: like going to school and spending time with their family.

Now that you know how many trips it would take, with your family or friends consider contributing based on that number to your One Great Hour of Sharing offering. Make an offering based on the number of trips you would have to make to meet your household needs if you carried all your water yourself. Pick an amount that is right for your gratitude and that will help others.

[1]According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency, "How We Use Water." https://www.epa.gov/watersense/how-we-use-water#:~:text=Water%20in%20Daily%20Life,-In%20the%20US&text=The%20average%20American%20family%20uses,of%20this%20use%20occurs%20indoors.

Worship Resources for Any Season and for Any Reason

Whether you are looking for a call to worship, a pastoral prayer, or an offering invitation, we want to help make One Great Hour of Sharing a meaningful part of your church's worship service. Maybe you are lifting up a special concern for those affected by a recent disaster, or maybe you just want to celebrate this ministry of the church that reaches so many parts of the globe. Here are some of the ways that pastors and worship leaders might incorporate One Great Hour of Sharing into the liturgy, in any season and for any reason.

CALL TO WORSHIP

Leader: Let us give thanks to God for every good gift; let us give thanks to God for people of courage who help to give hope wherever there is need.

People: Today we especially pray for the people in the path of *[Hurricane Michael]* – those who have lost their lives or their loved ones, those whose livelihoods and homes have been battered by the fury of wind and sea and storm.

Leader: Be with them all, O God, with your tender mercies and abiding hope.

People: We pray for those first responders who indeed offer hope in tangible form – firefighters and paramedics, police officers and soldiers, doctors and nurses, pastors and so many others who brave danger and are a source of comfort and strength.

Leader: Our prayers will not cease when the storm passes, nor will our gifts. We are grateful for One Great Hour of Sharing and its partners who are assisting so many, who will be there when the cameras are gone.

People: Thanks be to God for people who are generous with their time, their talents, their prayers, and their gifts, for they are surely a sign of God's good reign. Amen.

PASTORAL PRAYER

After the storm:

Loving Creator,

We know that you are with us in every time and place. In all things, you are faithful. But when winds are raging, we may find it hard to hear your voice. When skies are dark, we may struggle to see your face. When all around is chaos, fear and destruction, the peace you promise seems worlds away.

And yet we continue to seek you in the storm. And we seek you in the morning after. Surround us with the certainty of your loving presence.

To those in raging winds, speak words of calm and comfort. For those in great darkness, send light. For those surrounded by the remains of what was, answer the silence with promises of all that might be.

Hear our prayer, O Lord. Renew our strength for the days ahead. May we hear again your call to be the Church, to speak comfort to those who weep, and to be present with those who suffer. We trust that you have given us every gift we need to meet the needs of this time. Teach us to walk in the way of Christ – sharing all that we have, and believing in your goodness in all things. Send us in your peace, Holy One. And may there be joy in the morning. Amen.

OFFERING INVITATION

Hurricanes and natural disasters bring out some of the best in people. Folks of every race, of every religion or no religion, of every class, step forth to help those who are hurting; whose lives are in shambles; who may wonder if anyone cares about them in the midst of so much suffering. They need not wonder, for folks with trucks and boats have helped carry people to safety, have helped get desperately sick people to hospitals, have tried to make sure that families stay together and have a safe place to recover. Know this: we too are those people. We may not drive a truck or pilot a boat, but we too can help our neighbors in dire need. While we may want to join our hands to those *[in the affected area]* now is not yet the time. We are ready to help when our presence is needed. But in the meantime, we can pray. And we can give. Every dollar given for disaster relief to One Great Hour of Sharing–our wider church family's disaster relief ministry– will go to work through our partners to assist those impacted by this terrible *[description of the situation]*. Those dollars will continue working long after the headlines have faded and the cameras have been turned off, One Great Hour of Sharing and its partners will still be there helping with long-term recovery. Please give generously, knowing that your gifts will help both now and in the months and years to come.

Image by Pixabay

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