

Top Giving Churches in 2008

We are proud to highlight these churches for their leadership support of the One Great Hour of Sharing® offering. This year we're recognizing the top 5 churches in 3 areas with at least \$2,000 total giving. Thank you all for your generosity, leadership, and faithfulness.

Top 5 churches based on per capita with less than 200 members

UNITED CHURCH IN UNIVERSITY PLACE, TACOMA, WASH.

Pacific Northwest Conference
74 Members, Per Capita: \$78.14

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL, BARABOO, WIS.

Wisconsin Conference
127 Members, Per Capita: \$53.98

LADERA COMMUNITY CHURCH, PORTOLA VALLEY, CALIF.

California Nevada Northern Conference
152 Members, Per Capita: \$42.72

FIRST UNITED CHURCH OF ARVADA, ARVADA, COLO.

Rocky Mountain Conference
149 Members, Per Capita: \$40.95

THE UNITED PARISH IN BROOKLINE, BROOKLINE, MASS.

Massachusetts Conference
115 Members, Per Capita: \$40.95

Top 5 churches based on per capita with 200 or more members

IRVINE UNITED CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, IRVINE, CALIF.

California, Nevada Southern Conference
261 Members, Per Capita: \$57.42

MAYFLOWER CONGREGATIONAL, NAPLES, FLA.

Florida Conference
248 Members, Per Capita: \$35.23

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL, CRYSTAL LAKE, ILL.

Illinois Conference
1,202 Members, Per Capita: \$34.73

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL, INDIANAPOLIS, IND.

Indiana-Kentucky Conference
216 Members, Per Capita: \$31.83

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST AT VALLEY FORGE, WAYNE, PA.

Pennsylvania Southeast Conference
293 Members, Per Capita: \$31.54

Top 5 Churches based on total dollar giving

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, REDWOOD CITY, CALIF.

California Nevada Northern
53 Members, 2008 Total: \$100,750
*Church gift was a tithe from the sale of their property

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL, CRYSTAL LAKE, ILL.

Illinois Conference
1,202 Members, 2008 Total: \$41,747

CENTRAL UNION CHURCH, HONOLULU, HAWAII

Hawaii Conference
2,361 Members, 2008 Total: \$20,175

CHURCH OF THE RED ROCKS, SODONA, ARIZ.

Southwest Conference
633 Members, 2008 Total: \$15,799

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, OLD LYME, CONN.

Connecticut Conference
992 Members, 2008 Total: \$15,000

2009 Ambassador's Award

Wilbur and Jane Valentine, Greencastle, Pa., Penn Central Conference. Members: St. Stephen's UCC, Upton, Pa.

Feeding 'lost sheep' easy for good neighbors

Imagine that you and your family had your lives threatened as part of an "ethnic cleansing" movement. So you fled your home in Myanmar (Burma) and have lived in a refugee camp for more than two decades.

Now your family has a chance to move to the United States. But you don't understand the language, the customs, the practices, the expectations. You all step off the plane and feel lost — almost, you might say, like the lost sheep of the Bible.

"But Jesus commands us to feed those lost sheep," says the Rev. Bonnie Hollinger, pastor of St. Peter's UCC in Lancaster, Pa. "Helping families like this is how Jesus wants us to live. How do we do it? God provides."

So this small congregation, with only 40-50 in worship each Sunday, answered the call. Pastor Bonnie estimates that they welcomed 10 refugee families within the next 12 months.

"People in my congregation have fallen in love," she says.

What kinds of things do they do? Here are just a few: Hold monthly community dinners for church members, refugees and church neighbors. * Introduce them to their homes (smoke detectors, fuse boxes, pilot lights.) * Give rides. * Teach English. * Invite a police officer to teach about security. * Teach how to ride the bus. * Invite a nurse to teach about immunizations. * Teach how to open a bank account, write checks, balance a checkbook, pay bills. * Teach how to use a microwave. * Help prepare



St. Peter's UCC photo

Bhutanese refugee Dega Timsina practices writing English words, while Linda Hess, St. Peter's UCC administrative assistant, encourages him.

them for job interviews. * Provide classes on dental hygiene.

Some of the refugees are Buddhists and Muslims and some are Karen and Chin Christians. Besides Myanmar, they have come from Iraq, Bhutan, Somalia and Nepal. St. Peter's also has started a Burmese congregation (with 60 worshiping), a Haitian congregation and a Hispanic congregation.

"We don't plan program," says Pastor Bonnie. "We are just good neighbors."

Volunteers feed lost sheep in the deserts of life

Wandering in the desert is not recommended. Yet many do it, driven to seek better lives, freedom from hunger and want, and a safe environment, even if it means illegally crossing dangerous borders. Others walk — not wander — along such desert borders, seeking lost wanderers, offering them water, shelter and safety.

Tracy Hughes is such a walker. As a full-time UCC *Partners in Service* volunteer with BorderLinks in Tucson, Ariz., Tracy lives and serves in border spaces. She seeks out the lost sheep of Jesus' flock, accompanying people in the midst of life's difficulties, recognizing the invisible people of our society as sisters and brothers.

With BorderLinks, Tracy accompanies groups on educational immersion trips along the U.S.-Mexico border. These mission trip groups learn first-hand of the economic desperation

that drives people to risk their lives in hopes of finding opportunities to feed their families. They see how Tracy accompanies people — encountering migrants in distress, or providing water in the desert or socks for battered and blistered feet.

Tracy feeds sheep as she goes. As you give to One Great Hour of Sharing, you are present with Tracy on the border with Mexico and with Jesus in the borderlands of life, helping to shape public policy so that all sheep will be fed.

Thank you for accompanying Tracy Hughes and others through your gifts to One Great Hour of Sharing.



BorderLinks photo

How to promote the OGHS offering

Follow these four steps to grow your offering:

Open materials when they arrive at your church. Become familiar with the resources and order additional quantities to share with others in your church who also promote the offering.

Generate excitement around the offering. Set a goal. Mail letters from the pastor to members and friends of the church and enclose the offering envelopes. Print announcements. Use bulletin inserts. Plan a skit. Share stories. Include the youth and young adults. Find ideas online at <www.ucc.org/oghs/resources>.

Honor the suggested offering date or season, or select another date to receive the offering. Help your congregation learn something new about the offering. Go online to find multiple resources, including sample sermons, maps, stories, skits, and even DVDs. Make the offering the high point of the service on Dedication Day. (The suggested date is March 14, 2010.)

Share the good news. Because of your members' generosity, your congregation was able to reach its goal. Let people know they can still give. Then send your congregation's gift to your UCC Conference Office, noting OGHS.

Thank you for your support!

