

*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,  
and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and  
with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself.*

Luke 10:27

# February

Stewards of Our Relationships with One Another:

## On Holy Ground



**W**e belong to God; we belong to one another. In his book, *Reaching Out*, Henri Nouwen tells of a reunion with a former student, an experience that revealed to him the meaning of community: “It is the Christ in you, who recognizes the Christ in me... From now on, wherever you go, or wherever I go, all the ground between us will be holy ground.”<sup>1</sup>

During February, let us walk on holy ground, practicing the radical hospitality Jesus modeled. Starting with our most personal and intimate relationships and moving through expanding circles – of friends, relations, church family, co-workers, and others with whom we come in contact – we tend to the quality of our interaction in these relationships using spiritual practices of forgiveness, reconciliation, justice, openness, honesty, hospitality, shaping communities. We widen our circle, reaching out to unknown neighbors through local and ecumenical service organizations and UCC programs and networks. We participate in the One Great Hour of Sharing special mission offering, typically promoted in churches during February and received the first Sunday in March.

**As centers of hope and transformation, local churches guide people onto holy ground.**

**SUGGESTED LEADERS/PARTNERS:**

Stewardship, Mission, Christian Education and Worship ministries.

**IDEAS FOR LEADERS:**

(Resource Websites and links: [www.ucc.org/stewardship](http://www.ucc.org/stewardship))

- **Continue the sermon series** with “Hospitality in the Household of God” (or another title).
- **Promote the One Great Hour of Sharing** special mission offering (see [www.ucc.org/oghs](http://www.ucc.org/oghs)).
- **Engage youth** in the Souper Bowl of Caring Service Blitz (see [www.ucc.org/youth](http://www.ucc.org/youth)).
- **Invite participation in Child Sponsorship**, Global Volunteer Service, People to People Pilgrimage and local outreach efforts.
- **Engage in spiritual practices** of forgiveness, reconciliation, justice, openness, honesty, hospitality, shaping communities through:
  - A “Spiritual Practice Sampler” (see January).
  - Sunday school classes, study groups or a retreat.
  - Practices for teens – “Forgiveness” and “Friends” chapters in *Way to Live*.
  - God’s Gifts, My Gifts* children’s activity sets: “Love Is the Greatest” and “Rooted in Love.”
- **Offer a “Fruits of the Spirit” inventory** (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control – Galatians 5:22-23) to identify areas for particular attention.
- **Do a book study** on *Reaching Out: The Three Movements of the Spiritual Life* by Henri J. M. Nouwen.
- **Schedule movie nights** on this theme at church or in homes.

***“With God, we not only receive, but we discover the gifted nature of the image of God within us which empowers us to make new relationships, giving and gifted.”***<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Henri J. M. Nouwen, *Reaching Out* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1975), 31.

<sup>2</sup> Rochelle A. Stackhouse, *The Gifting God*, 7.