

Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

Romans 15:7

October

Stewards of God's Extravagant Welcome:

An MM, ONA, A2A, JP Church



Jesus didn't turn people away, neither do we." When you're gutsy enough to make such a claim, it's not always easy to make good on it. Following Jesus' lead, the United Church of Christ strives to keep doors open to all.¹

Our welcome embraces both those we invite to participate in our congregations, as well as those outside the church, with whom we work for God's justice and compassion. Who is welcome? God's children of different cultures, races, genders, ages, sexual orientations, abilities,

economic situations, and theological traditions. It isn't always easy to be so open. Each UCC congregation prayerfully discerns and expresses how wide their doors and arms are open. Some state it this way, "We are a multicultural and multiracial, open and affirming, accessible to all, and just peace church."²

The foundation for this work is the gracious gift of love, freedom and justice given to us by God. In covenant with one another, we are called to seek a deeper beloved community. By inviting others to share in the reconciling work of God in the world we invite them into discipleship with Christ.³

As centers of hope and transformation, local churches will join faith with hospitality as bold people of God's welcome.

SUGGESTED LEADERS/PARTNERS:

Stewardship, Social Action, Growth, Outreach, Christian Education and Youth ministries.

IDEAS FOR LEADERS:

(Resource Websites and links: www.ucc.org/stewardship, www.uccvitality.org, www.ucc.org/evangelism)

- **Continue the sermon series** with “God’s Extravagant Welcome.”
- **Celebrate World Communion Sunday;** receive the Neighbors in Need offering.
- **Engage in anti-racism study** using a resource like *Even the Stones Will Cry Out for Justice, Steps Toward Wholeness*, or *Show No Partiality*.
- **Engage teens** with the “Welcome” chapter in *Way to Live*.
- **Celebrate Access Sunday** and Disabilities Awareness Week (see www.uccdm.org).
- **Observe** National Children’s Sabbath (see www.ucc.org/children).
- **Study** the General Synod Pronouncements and Resolutions calling the UCC to be a multiracial and multicultural (1993), open and affirming (1985), accessible to all (2005), and just peace church (1985). Identify what your church is doing and strategize next steps.
- **Have a “Rally/Homecoming Sunday”** to invite former members and ask new friends.
- **Become, or grow** as, a Stillspeaking Church. Strengthen your invitation using *The Power of Invitation and Welcome* (free download). Attend a Ready, Set, Grow training event.
- **Strengthen evangelism** and help members talk about their faith using:

16 Ways to Say “I Love My Church”
Are You Ready to Talk About Your Church?
God Is Still Speaking Through You and Me!

***“No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey,
 you’re welcome here.”***

THE STILLSPEAKING INITIATIVE

1 From www.uccvitality.org, October 2007.

2 *Ibid.*

3 *UCC Manual on Church* (Draft-October 2007).