



sharing resources, changing lives

# One Great Hour of Sharing

## 2007 Mission Report

### A Word of Thanks

Dear Friends,

Fires burned across Absarokee, Montana in September 2006 which brought destruction and tears. The Community Congregational Church, UCC in Absarokee remembers the day the tears were replaced by joy.

Many of our ranchers were left with very little. There were hundreds of miles of fence to replace and homes and barns to rebuild. Our little church was so excited to receive support from One Great Hour of Sharing® (OGHS) and the office of National Disaster Ministries, in a grant that provided fence posts to our community. The handing out of fence posts was a wonderful day.

Our rural community has always been very generous with the OGHS offering. Every week as we pray over our regular offering, we pray that it goes where it is needed so that people may know that God is at work in the world through us. Imagine when it came back to Absarokee, Montana! Truly God is in our midst when community is built up, brokenness is healed and hearts and minds join together to solve problems. Every year we are faithful givers to OGHS - we would never have dreamed that we would one day receive something from this effort.

God is Still Speaking in Montana! We heard it loud and clear when we cried out for help! Thanks to all of us who make this offering such a powerful witness to the world and to some folks off the beaten path in Montana.

There is now green peeking up and new calves everywhere to remind us that God makes all things new! One Great Hour of Sharing, sharing resources, changing lives!

Rev. Nan Sollo  
Community Congregational Church UCC  
Absarokee, MT

*Thank you!*

### Investing in Women and Children through Microfinance

One Great Hour of Sharing provides annual investments and grants to partners engaged in microfinance initiatives designed to enable families living in poverty to obtain credit and start small businesses. Increasingly, partners are supplementing loans with education on how to save money, budget, negotiate and manage debt.

The year 2007 marked the launch of OGHS partner Freedom from Hunger's Microfinance and Health Protection (MAHP) initiative. Families living in poverty are often devastated by costly health crises. Microfinance organizations that depend on women's ability to repay loans, want to help their clients safeguard their own health as well as their families'. The MAHP initiative is working with five microfinance institutions in Benin, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, India and the Philippines to develop new combinations of microfinance and health-protection services. These packages include health savings accounts and emergency loans, supporting local sellers of health care products, enrolling microfinance borrowers in health insurance programs and making service contracts with local health care providers. Safeguarding health is a way to alleviate chronic hunger.

OGHS is pleased to partner with Oikocredit, [www.oikocredit.org](http://www.oikocredit.org); ECLOF, [www.eclof.org](http://www.eclof.org), and Freedom from Hunger, [www.freedomfromhunger.org](http://www.freedomfromhunger.org) to provide microfinance opportunities for women around the world.

Raja had two sons with pneumonia. One died before Raja learned that Freedom from Hunger's MAHP partner in India, Bandhan, was offering loans to pay for health emergencies. She took a loan that saved the life of her second son by enabling her to pay for medical treatment. Raja describes her joy. "Had I not received this health loan from Bandhan, I would have lost both my sons as well as my assets, and my life would have been in a state of loneliness and misery. Bandhan brought light back into my family."



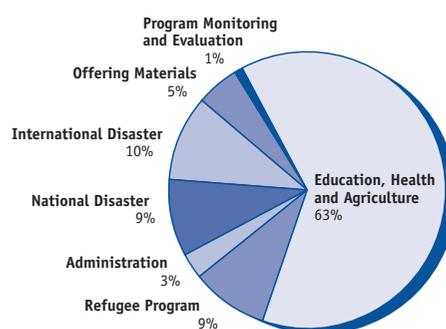
Photo: Foods Resource Bank

Your gifts to One Great Hour of Sharing carry God's message of love and hope to people in more than eighty countries! The United Church of Christ works with international partners to provide sources of clean water and food, education and healthcare, small business micro-credit, emergency relief and advocacy and resettlement for refugees and displaced persons. Your gifts also support domestic and international ministries for disaster preparedness and response.

Thank you for every gift you've offered. Sharing resources really does change lives!

In 2006, UCC members and churches gave \$3,097,636 to One Great Hour of Sharing – sharing their resources for changing lives in the ways shown in this chart. Additionally that year, we gave \$1.5 million to UCC special appeals for domestic and international emergencies.

### 2006 Annual Offering



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST



## Top Giving Churches

### Sharing Resources, Changing Lives!

These twelve churches had the highest per capita giving to the One Great Hour of Sharing offering among churches who gave \$2,000 or more in 2006. Thank you all for your generosity, leadership, and faithfulness.

#### **Kingsbury Community United Church of Christ Vernal, Utah**

Rocky Mountain Conference  
40 Members with Per Capita of \$78.53

#### **Bethany United Church of Christ Lebanon, Ohio**

Ohio Conference  
73 Members with Per Capita of \$52.99

#### **First Congregational United Church of Christ Baraboo, Wisconsin**

Wisconsin Conference  
125 Members with Per Capita of \$51.39

#### **Congregational Church of Mercer Island Mercer Island, Washington**

Pacific Northwest Conference  
96 Members with Per Capita of \$50.85

#### **Ladera Community Church Portola Valley, California**

California, Nevada Northern Conference  
152 Members with Per Capita of \$38.43

#### **United Church in University Place Tacoma, Washington**

Pacific Northwest Conference  
101 Members with Per Capita of \$38.08

#### **Union Memorial Church Stamford, Connecticut**

Connecticut Conference  
122 Members with Per Capita of \$35.53

#### **First Congregational United Church of Christ Geneseo, Illinois**

Illinois Conference  
261 Members with Per Capita of \$34.71

#### **United Church of Christ Congregational Plainfield, New Jersey**

Central Atlantic Conference  
105 Members with Per Capita of \$34.29

#### **Plymouth Congregational United Church of Christ Grand Rapids, Michigan**

Michigan Conference  
287 Members with Per Capita of \$32.95

#### **First Congregational San Rafael, California**

California, Nevada Northern Conference  
84 Members with Per Capita of \$31.38

#### **United Church of Christ at Valley Forge Wayne, Pennsylvania**

Pennsylvania Southeast  
292 Members with Per Capita of \$29.74

## Working Together: Sharing Resources, Changing Lives

Since 1949, North American churches have joined together in support of One Great Hour of Sharing®. Collectively over \$20 million is raised annually. Our churches work cooperatively with Church World Service and each other on many mission projects.

American Baptist Churches USA  
African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church  
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
Church of the Brethren  
Cumberland Presbyterian Church  
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)  
Reformed Church in America  
United Church of Christ  
The United Methodist Church



## Changing Lives, Challenging Oppressive Social Systems

By Tom Liddle, WCM Board Member

*"Do not neglect to do good, and to share what you have" Hebrews 13:16*

Like many who grew up in a mainline Protestant tradition, as a kid I can remember the little "fish box" on our dinner table during Lent. Each night before we ate, my dad would pray and my sister and I would put some change (which our parents had given us) in the box for the One Great Hour of Sharing offering. It was a good way for my sister and I to begin to learn about generosity. I remember the pictures on the box, and usually they were of villagers in Africa or Asia.

As an adult I've traveled in developing countries in Central America and Asia and those experiences have been transformative in my journey as a Christian. In light of those experiences, I see the world and read the Bible in a very different way.

Although many of us understand - at least on an intellectual level - the struggle of poverty and injustice faced by many in the developing world, those struggles are sometimes abstract and removed from our daily lives and the concerns of the local church. Part of the journey of becoming a "global mission church" involves raising our awareness of global struggles, and doing our best to lift up those living in poverty (Deut. 15:11, Matt. 25) and to advocate on their behalf (Is. 1:16-17). Learning about and promoting the One Great Hour of Sharing offering in your local church is a great way to do this.

For the past several years, it has been my privilege to represent the Minnesota Conference on the UCC Board of Wider Church Ministries. Through service on the Board, I have learned first hand the amazing and powerful work of the One Great Hour of Sharing offering. OGHS supports programs in agricultural development, disaster preparedness and response, refugee advocacy and resettlement, healthcare and education. In a very real sense, the offering changes lives and challenges social systems that oppress people.

I believe strongly that if each local church knew more what amazing work the offering did, people would give much more generously. The denomination will be sending out information packets in January containing everything you need to learn about the work of the offering. So please, do what you can to educate your congregation about OGHS and promote generous giving to this important offering during Lent!



## UCC & CWS Sign Covenant

During 2007 fall meetings, the Executive Council of the UCC and the Board of Directors of Church World Service (CWS) affirmed their common mission as Christians working together with partners to eradicate hunger and poverty and to promote peace and justice around the world by signing a covenant of ecumenical mission.

The United Church of Christ, as a Church World Service member communion, has covenanted to provide representation, program support and financial support to CWS; to be in dialog with CWS and other member communions; and to work together in ecumenical mission.

The UCC has representatives serving on the CWS Board of Directors, and on program ministry committees including Education & Advocacy, Immigration & Refugees, and Emergency Response.

Together the UCC and CWS - relying on God's grace and generosity, and celebrating the gifts of our global partners - committed to living into the unity of the church, which is Christ's prayer for the sake of fulfilling God's mission in the world.

Each year, nearly one-third of the UCC's One Great Hour of Sharing offering is shared with and through Church World Service to help address grassroots development, emergency assistance and refugee and immigrant needs around the world.

An informative brochure celebrating The United Church of Christ and Church World Service relationship is available from United Church Resources: 1-800-325-7061.



UCC and CWS representatives signing the covenant.



**Tents of Hope**  
A journey of compassion and peace  
with the refugees of Darfur, Sudan  
[www.tentsofhope.org](http://www.tentsofhope.org)

## In Troubled Darfur – Hopelessness to Hope!

Killings of African Union peacekeepers, drivers, and the detention of aid workers in the conflict-ridden Darfur region of Western Sudan are just some examples of a continually volatile situation, now in its fifth year.

From June to late August 2007, the United Nations reported 55,000 new persons being displaced in the region. Speaking under a plastic tarp on a drizzling day in Darfur, Mariam recounted how she was displaced eight months ago by attacks in which her husband and son-in-law were killed, forcing her to become the sole support for a household of six children.

Mariam said she would not return to her village 93 miles away given the insecurity in her home region, the schooling her daughter is now receiving, and the difficulty she would face trying to make a living without a male bread-winner.

As dire and hopeless as the situation seems, there is also hope. The United Church of Christ through One Great Hour of Sharing® is supporting partners in the region to improve the conditions in Darfur. Humanitarian aid, including food, continues to be provided. Water and sanitation in refugee camps are being improved. Health clinics are now providing health care for the most vulnerable children and elderly in addition to well-care for pregnant women. Schools have been established for children in the Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) camps and for the communities hosting the camps so that most of the children can receive an education.

Raising awareness in the US on the conflict in Sudan through education, advocacy, and fundraising for humanitarian assistance is the goal of the Tents of Hope Campaign, a national, interfaith, community-based project that unites artistic creativity with social concern. Local churches are invited to create a simulation refugee tent in their communities and to transform it into a hopeful work of art by painting the tent. Tents of Hope will culminate in a collective action as local communities bring their tents and delegations to Washington, DC for a national event in October 2008. The website [www.tentsofhope.org](http://www.tentsofhope.org) includes project guidelines, a photo gallery of tents, free downloadable posters, and promotional materials.

Linking support for humanitarian relief with advocacy for lasting change is a growing emphasis of One Great Hour of Sharing in complex conflict situations around the world.

## Giving to Transform

For a number of years, every December, an anonymous donor gave \$5,000 to Grace Immanuel UCC in Louisville, Kentucky. "Each time, we would give half of it away," said Rev. J. Gregory Bain, pastor. "This past year, the same donor died and left the church a bequest of \$50,000, and she was not even a member. It was a test... I think money should be used in a way that pulls us personally into mission and then replenished" said Rev. Bain. The money was shared with a conference camp, seminary education fund, Habitat for Humanity work trips and refugee resettlement.

Grace Immanuel was no stranger to helping refugees. The Church has resettled 20 refugees in the past 8 years through the United Church of Christ/Church World Service Resettlement Program. Thanks to this bequest, they were able to help a Karen Refugee family headed by Daniel Manh Aung. Daniel was forced to flee his home in Burma (Myanmar) 23 years ago to Thailand. While in exile, he married Paw Mu Na and together they raised three daughters in the confinement of a refugee camp.

On May 23, 2007 the family was welcomed and assisted by members of the Grace Immanuel UCC. When interviewed in October 2007, church member, Marda Dewey explained that the mother and father are working. The father attends English classes at Kentucky Refugee Ministries (KRM) every morning before going to work. Eldest daughter, Mu Law Eh, 20, speaks English well, and was hired as an interpreter for KRM. The two younger daughters are enrolled in and attending high school. When the family was asked if they liked their new home, they said it was nothing like the camp.

When gifts are shared lives are changed, not just the recipient – but the giver as well. "One of the things that has been great about this sponsorship is I think we've matured as a congregation," said Rev. Bain. "It's gotten easier. We have a handful of people who value the cross-cultural experience and see it as a component of their discipleship."

Through gifts to One Great Hour of Sharing®, refugees are resettled in communities beyond refugee camps.



*The Aung Family and Grace Immanuel UCC member, Marda Dewey*



## Kid to Kid

The church school of Newman Congregational UCC, Rumford, Rhode Island, created a "Prayer Card" project to raise support for the children of Iraq and Afghanistan. It all began when church members were sending cards and letters to family members serving in the military, stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan. Senior Pastor, Campbell Lovett, suggested an initiative to benefit Iraqi and Afghan children, to which the church readily agreed. A prayer (below) was written for Iraqi and Afghan children. Church school children colored pictures on the back of the prayer card. The wallet-sized cards were laminated and sold to church members, asking that they regularly offer the prayer. Funds raised were donated to the OGHS Special Fund for the Iraq Humanitarian Crisis. Thank you Ruth Hainsworth, Minister of Christian Education, for sharing this story with us.

We'd love to hear your story of creative ways to raise prayers and funds for One Great Hour of Sharing.

Email: [oghs@ucc.org](mailto:oghs@ucc.org)  
or call toll-free: 1-866-822-8234 x 3215.

### A Prayer for the Children of Iraq and Afghanistan

Loving and gentle God,  
to you we turn this day  
to ask your special blessings  
on these children in harm's way.  
These little ones are precious, God,  
as you know oh so well.  
Help us to remember how beloved they are  
as they live cradled in war's shell. Amen.



## What do you see?

In 2008, One Great Hour of Sharing introduces a new graphic identity. What do you see when you first view the logo? Look again – does any new image appear? Ask others to view the logo. How does the logo illustrate the mission and spirit of this offering? Send your response by March 30 to: [oghs@ucc.org](mailto:oghs@ucc.org). All entries will be reviewed by the Wider Church Ministries One Great Hour of Sharing Committee. The author of the entry deemed to best interpret the new logo will receive a special item bearing the new OGHS logo – and will have her/his response posted on the OGHS web site.

## OGHS Offering: March 2, 2008

The suggested offering date for the One Great Hour of Sharing, special mission offering is the fourth Sunday of Lent. Nearly 80 percent of UCC congregations take part. By participating in the offering, you provide resources that improve the lives of individuals and communities around the world.

Below are six simple steps you can take to help the offering grow:

1. **Encourage participation** by your congregation every year.
2. **Set a goal** for your congregation. Reach for a 10% increase over your highest gift.
3. **Use the OGHS resources** scheduled to arrive in churches between January 4-18, 2008.
4. **Share the good news.** Stories are available in the materials and on the website [www.ucc.org/oghs](http://www.ucc.org/oghs).
5. **Invite generosity.** (Support from the pastor is vital in having the church support the offering generously.)
6. **Celebrate.** Announce the offering total, thank people for their gifts and celebrate the ministry made possible by OGHS.

**Thank you for your support!**

## One Great Hour of Sharing United Church of Christ

### Global Sharing of Resources (Staff)

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### Wider Church Ministries

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### Global Ministries Mission Personnel

Supported by One Great Hour of Sharing

#### Bruce Hanson

Health Worker, Honduras

#### Anil Henry

Medical Superintendent and Surgeon, India

#### Teresa Henry

Teacher and Administrator, India

#### Kathleen Kamphoefner

Refugee Coordinator, Egypt

#### Bethsaba Nafziger

Community Health Worker, Nepal

#### Paul Pierce

Refugee Coordinator, Egypt

## Connecting in Christ through Compassion Sharing Resources – Changing Lives

Debra Joseph and Dani Wagner from New Orleans, Louisiana and Linda Crowe from Spokane Valley, Washington are three UCC members, whose lives were ever changed by Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

Debra and Dani's homes were among the thousands of homes flooded when the levees broke in New Orleans sending water gushing into the city after Hurricane Katrina. Linda participated in an adult mission trip engaged in disaster recovery who, like so many others, volunteered in New Orleans early on in the recovery process mucking out houses that had been flooded. Linda's group was assigned to Debra's and to Dani's homes.

Linda tells the story of finding a lace tablecloth in Dani's home; dirty but not completely destroyed. That tablecloth had been made by Dani's mother fifty years earlier. The group took it back to the church where they were staying and ran it through the washing machine. It emerged with holes caused by the disaster, but clean and presentable back to the family. The tablecloth symbolized hope and transformation by again becoming part of Dani's family story.

Debra tells the stories of how the presence of the wider church was a blessing. In the midst of the disaster she remembers how hard it was just to survive and pick up the pieces of her life and the lives of her loved ones. Debra knew she was not alone. And as time passed, she was able to continue to live the courage of working with her extended family and community to bring them back and shape them in life-giving ways.

Hurricane survivors become living testimonies that new life is possible. Their trust in God to see them through this painful time reveals on-going faith that sustains. Volunteer groups become living testimonies that people are not alone and that God is there.

Resources shared through One Great Hour of Sharing support programs that enable volunteers to serve in disaster recovery settings – sharing time and talent, connecting with others, changing the lives of all involved.



*Dan and Chuck Wagner in front of their home with Linda and Randy Crowe*



*Debra Joseph, Linda Crowe and work group from Pacific-Northwest Conference in front of Debra's FEMA trailer*



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United Church of Christ  
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