

Global Ministries

GLOBAL AND LOCAL PARTNERS TO WORK FOR JUSTICE, RECONCILIATION, AND PEACE

prepare

What's behind all this?

"To believe is to care. To care is to act." This slogan was printed on bumper stickers to describe the United Church of Christ several years ago, now. Some folks critiqued the slogan for not mentioning God explicitly. But for others in the UCC, that commitment was implicit, knowing that God is at the center, inspiring and grounding our caring and acting.

The UCC's theological commitments affirm that God creates, God loves, and God hopes for love and justice for all of God's creation. These ideas are echoed in the UCC's Statement of Faith and elsewhere in the Church. God's hope becomes the inspiration for our hope, and we are called to share in God's hope, love, and work both for and in partnership with the entire world.

One way that the UCC connects to caring and acting, gratitude and giving, peace and justice, and service and advocacy around the world is through Global Ministries. Global Ministries, done in partnership with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), has as its vision and mission to "receive and share the Good News of Jesus Christ by joining with global and local partners to work for justice, reconciliation, and peace." They train and support missionaries who work in partnership with organizations local to different parts of the world, organize child and elder sponsorship, and make international internships and partner-to-partner trips possible for groups to experience, learn, and serve in various locations.

Global Ministries at its core is an ecumenical mission commitment to a shared life in Christ, to an ecumenical global sharing of resources, and to a prophetic vision of a just, sustainable, and peaceful world, joining with God's concern for the poor and the oppressed. They do this through a Critical Presence strategic approach. That is, they aim "to be timely and appropriately meeting God's people and creation at the point of deepest need: spiritually, physically, emotionally, and/or economically."

They focus attention particularly on

- Pastoral ministries related to fear and hopelessness where people are desperate for meaning and related to dangerous or life-threatening situations related to social, economic, or political realities
- Partners living in countries wherein Christians are a minority
- Supporting, encouraging, and accompanying others in interfaith relations
- Conflict transformation and resolution

As you prepare for this session

- Check the length of any videos
- Make a timeline for this session
- Choose your "engage" activity/activities
- Double-check the materials needed

Where is this going?

Participants will explore Global Ministries' purpose, its approach to ministry through accompaniment, its importance in the UCC's theologically grounded commitment to love and justice, as well as its current work around the world.

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- Places where capacity-building and healthcare are a primary need
- Facilitating the engagement of local congregations and other church settings in global mission and ministry
- Exploring and implementing economic alternatives which empower communities, giving priority to the poorest communities and those in turmoil

Global Ministries is an important way that the UCC, in partnership with other united and uniting churches, lives into God's vision of hope, peace, justice, and reconciliation throughout the world.

Participants' Perspectives

- Global Ministries may be a mystery to some of your participants. They may come to this conversation with already formed ideas about how missionaries approach their work and their purpose. It will be helpful to introduce Global Ministries' emphasis on partnership, mutuality, and accompaniment.
- Some participants may already be familiar with Global Ministries from having learned about its ministry from meeting missionaries, having been a part of being or becoming a Global Mission Church, or participating in partner-to-partner trips or child or elder sponsorship. Help participants connect Global Ministries to the history and the theological commitments of the UCC.

encounter

Video

1. Warm Up
To get a clear sense of what Global Ministries is and does, you may have to first dispel some commonly held presumptions about missionaries and mission work. Ask participants to name what comes to mind when they hear the words "Christian missionary" or "missionary work." Suggest to participants that what Global Ministries and its missionaries do may not fit the stereotypes. Ask participants to listen closely to what Global Ministries is, what kinds of work their missionaries do, and what principles (like accompaniment, critical presence, and partnership) guide their work.
2. Watch
These two videos teach about Global Ministries from slightly different perspectives. The first was produced by Global Ministries and introduces their context, work, and guiding principles. The second introduces background, history, core values, and how your local church can be involved.
 - "Global Ministries: United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)"

Materials:

-Ability to show video

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- “Global Ministries: Global and Local Partners to Work for Justice, Reconciliation, and Peace”

3. Unpack

- What’s the purpose of Global Ministries?
- Describe the model of accompaniment and critical presence.
- Where is Global Ministries actively involved around the world and in what ways are they involved?
- How does working in partnership with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) reflect a historic commitment of the UCC of being a united and uniting church? If needed, explain or review the UCC’s history and what it means to be a united and uniting church.

engage

Choose one or more activities to explore the session’s themes.

Activity One: Core Values

Spend some time looking at the mission, vision, and core values of Global Ministries to get a better idea of their approach. These are listed on their website, globalministries.org. Provide copies of the core values or project them for participants to see. Have participants read through them individually or together. Using what was also shared in the video, have participants put the core values of Global Ministries into their own words.

Questions for conversation while participants work:

- What are the core values of the Global Ministries?
- Why are these core values theologically important?
- How do the core values reflect the historic commitments and the theological orientation of the UCC?
- In what ways are these core values grounded in scripture?
- Does mission or outreach work in your local church reflect similar values?
- How might adopting (or adapting) Global Ministries’ approach to mission work change how you or your church approaches missions?

Activity Two: Hearing Firsthand

Learn more about the experiences of a Global Ministries missionary by listening to stories of their work or reading their blogs. Video recordings are available on the Global Ministries Vimeo channel at vimeo.com/globalministries. Links to missionaries’ blogs are available at globalministries.org.

Questions for reflection with participants:

- What kinds of work are the missionaries doing?
- How does their work reflect the commitment of Global Ministries to

Materials:

-Copies of the core values of Global Ministries

Materials:

-Access to videos
-Access or copies of blog posts

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critical presence?

- Who are they working in partnership with?
- What stuck out to you about their experiences?
- What questions do you have about their work?

Activity Three: Addressing Issues of Global Concern

Connect the focus of outreach or justice work of your local congregation with the work being done by Global Ministries. Some themes of work within Global Ministries and its partners include community development, Earth care, education, empowering women, food security, healthcare, human rights, human trafficking, refugees, migrants, work with children, disaster response, ecumenical and interfaith relations, evangelism and church capacity building, HIV/AIDS, justice and advocacy, peacemaking, and clean water. To learn more about what is currently happening within one of these areas, visit the Global Ministries website and under the resource section, select worship resources. There you will find links and more information on each of these issues and what efforts are transpiring.

Either project the resources and updates on one area of focus from the website or provide hard copies for participants to read through together.

Questions for reflection with participants:

- What work is being done in this particular area of focus?
- Who are they working in partnership with?
- Is it a focus or concern in more than one geographic area?
- What similarities and differences do you see in what work is happening in different areas around related issues?
- How does their work reflect the commitment of Global Ministries to critical presence?
- In reading missionaries' stories, what stuck out about their experiences?
- What challenges have they faced?
- How does their work compare with work of your local church in this area of focus?
- Given the UCC's commitment to covenant and relationship between different settings of the Church and various ministry partners, how is your local church living into covenant with Global Ministries?

Activity Four: Working in the World

Investigate the work of Global Ministries in a particular region of the world. To learn more about what is currently happening within one of these regions, visit the Global Ministries website and you will find a section indicating where they serve. Select a region to find news about the region as well as articles from missionaries and those supporting the work there. On the website you will also find links to the work in individual countries in that region. Additionally, videos about the work in different regions and countries are available on the Global Ministries Vimeo channel, vimeo.com/globalministries. Many videos there explain different historical

Materials:

- Access to websites
- Ability to project a website or copies of resources from Global Ministries

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and cultural contexts for the work as well as the different initiatives.

Either project the resources and videos or adapt this lesson by providing hard copies for participants to read through together.

Questions for reflection with participants:

- What work is being done in this particular area or region?
- What is the historical or cultural context?
- Who are they working in partnership with?
- How are the different areas of focus related (or not) in the region or country you are exploring?
- How does their work reflect the commitment of Global Ministries to accompaniment and critical presence?
- In reading missionaries' stories, what stuck out about their experiences?
- What challenges have they faced?
- Given the UCC's commitment to covenant between different settings of the Church and various ministry partners, how is your local church living into covenant with Global Ministries work in this region?

Activity Five: Getting Involved

Learn more about how to get involved in different ways with Global Ministries. Select one or more subjects below.

One Great Hour of Sharing

One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS), as part of Our Church's Wider Mission, is the special mission offering of the United Church of Christ that carries God's message of love and hope to people in crisis. Several Christian denominations work together to develop common promotional materials for OGHS, but each denomination receives and manages its respective offering. This fund, in part, supports the direct mission efforts of churches and church-based organizations with which the UCC and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) have partnerships through Global Ministries. Note that funds raised through OGHS also support other partner organizations that respond to development, disaster, and refugee needs in over one hundred countries and that provide disaster relief and immigration assistance in the U.S.

Show the video and use other resources on ucc.org/oghs to teach about OGHS. This may be a good time to lift up that this is one of the five special offerings of the UCC and to explore a bit more about what they do. Ask participants about whether their congregations have supported OGHS and how they might want to expand their contributions and support of this work around the world.

Short Term Mission Trips

Watch the video "Sunitha Mortha" on the Global Ministries Vimeo channel.

Afterwards, ask participants

- What motivates people to go on short-term mission trips? What do people hope to experience, learn, or do?
- In the video, the host talks about accompaniment. What is accompaniment? Why is this an important approach?

Go a Step Further:

Ask participants to take what they've learned and create a plan to teach the congregation, association, or conference about the work of Global Ministries. Perhaps participants want to plan a worship service around a particular issue or region, teach a youth or adult forum, organize a panel discussion, ask a missionary to come and speak, or publicize the work of Global Ministries in some way. Invite them to brainstorm together, then help them begin to put their plan into action.

Materials:

- Access to websites
- Ability to project a website or copies of resources from Global Ministries

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- American culture leans towards individualism. How does this culture form a lens through which people may see or judge the world?
- What does the host suggest about how to have cross-cultural conversations?
- How does participating in Global Ministries reflect UCC values, commitments, and theology?

Becoming a Global Mission Church

A Global Mission Church is a special designation with the UCC for a church that has been through discernment and conversation and has determined that they want to have a committed relationship with Global Ministries. These churches pledge to share the Good News of Jesus Christ from their doorsteps to the ends of the earth, and also to receive that same Good News from international partners around the world in a reciprocal relationship. They plan and carry out various actions in support of Global Ministries and its partners. A Global Mission Church prays for partners and missionaries, educates members about overseas mission, seeks justice for the international community, and financially supports Global Ministries.

Ahead of this lesson, visit globalministries.org and fill out the request for more information on becoming a Global Mission Church. The material will walk you through how to begin conversation with your congregation as well as what a process of discernment would include.

wrap-up

Regroup

Gather to share and reflect on what you've discovered and learned today.

Questions for conversation:

- What was one new learning for you today?
- What do you want to think about more?
- What will you do in response?

Closing

Close time together by having each participant share one thing they are grateful for from their time together.

Sending

Offer a prayer of thanksgiving for Global Ministries, its missionaries, and its partner churches. Offer blessing for each of the participants as they seek to support ministries of justice, peace, and reconciliation.

The Five Special Offerings:

The five special offerings of the UCC are

- Our Church's Wider Mission
- One Great Hour of Sharing
- Strengthen the Church
- Neighbors in Need
- The Christmas Fund

Churches that provide financial support to all of these are known as 5 for 5 churches.