UMCOR SUNDAY

SERMON STARTER



Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.
The people of The United Methodist Church®

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CREATED TO DO GOOD THINGS

This sermon starter gives you a scripturally centered message that connects UMCOR Sunday with the lectionary texts for the Fourth Sunday in Lent in Year B (Ephesians 2:1-10 and John 3:14-21). It can be adapted for whichever Sunday your church celebrates UMCOR Sunday. The sermon starter is designed to coordinate with the "Created to Do Good Things" liturgy, offering talk, children's message and children's bulletin.

> **"We are God's accomplishment, created in Christ Jesus to do good things."**
>
> Ephesians 2:10 CEB

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, Jenny, a 32-year-old single mother, was already struggling. With a fifth child on the way, she supplemented her hard work with SNAP benefits and family assistance.

When the pandemic hit, she found local food prices rising. And when a severe storm left her mountainous community in eastern Kentucky without power, all the food she had in the refrigerator spoiled. She received a short-term replenishment at the emergency food pantry but was left to wonder how she would survive for the next two months.

The United Methodist Committee on Relief was there, created in Christ Jesus to do good things. Through an UMCOR Sheltering in Love COVID-19 Rapid Response grant, Jenny was able to feed her family in June and July.

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We have seen in our own community how UMCOR is at work. (Preacher may include a story of how your church or conference has volunteered for and/or benefited from UMCOR.)

UMCOR is a vital part of our shared ministry through The United Methodist Church. It helps us to live out God's mission—*missio Dei*—and do the good works needed.

In the Letter to the Ephesians, the writer encourages the people to live out their salvation in Christ. He wants the people to recognize that "God so loved the world" and sent Jesus to wake us up out of our self-absorbed, destructive ways.

Throughout the Lenten season, we reflect on the ways that we have fallen short of God's expectations. In what ways have I just done my own thing, not worried about what God wants or what is best for those around me?

So often we live in fear. We live with a sense of scarcity. And because of that, we tend to hold on tightly, afraid of letting go of what little we believe we have.

But even so, Paul reminds us, "God is rich in mercy." We don't need to do good works for God to love us. We don't need to do anything but receive God's gift of grace.

We have all experienced loss this year and there has been a lot of suffering. But we have also seen God's love, mercy and grace at work.

I wonder where you have experienced healing through community. Maybe you were able to help a neighbor or perhaps you received support from someone just at the right time.

Caring for one another and receiving care breaks us out of our scarcity mentality. Giving of our time, our talents and our gifts frees us to live in God's abundant grace. Through our mutual relationship in Christ, there is enough for everyone.

"We are God's accomplishment, created in Christ Jesus to do good things. God planned for these good things to be the way that we live our lives."

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This is the good news. Living as Christ showed us to live is an awakening. We too can be resurrected. We don't have to stay in a place of despair.

When we recognize God loves us more than can be measured, how can we respond in any way except to pass on that love to others, living as God would want us to live?

Today we have an opportunity to do just that. For 80 years, grounded in the teachings of Jesus, UMCOR has responded, through the support of United Methodist churches like ours, to people suffering from the effects of war, civil unrest, storms, wildfires, famines and floods.

Isn't it wonderful that through UMCOR, we can live our lives doing the good things that God would have us do?