SPECIAL SUNDAY



SERMON STARTER
UMCOR SUNDAY

These worship resources are part of the UMCOR Sunday pastor and leader kit.
They may be adapted for your context and integrated into your worship service with the other material in the kit.
The scripture readings are inspired by Ephesians 2:1–10; John 3:14–21.

In seasons where suffering is frequently measured in headlines, numbers, storms, fires, wars, hunger, migration, and loss, the people of God are called to offer more than sympathy. We are called to embody the love of Jesus Christ in real time. UMCOR Sunday reminds us that Christian generosity is not simply a financial response; it is a spiritual witness. It is the Church saying, "God is still present. God still heals. God still sends help. And God still works through people willing to love in practical ways."

Scripture is filled with people facing challenges, those who are weary in the wilderness. They are discouraged, afraid, and surrounded by danger. God has a word to speak in this moment. In Ephesians 2, Paul reminds the Church that we are saved by grace and "created in Christ Jesus for good works." In John 3, we hear the heart of the Gospel: God so loved the world.

That is the foundation of UMCOR Sunday: God so loved the world — not just the peaceful world, not just the stable world, not just the comfortable world, but the hurting world, the displaced world, the flooded world, the hungry world, the war-torn world, the grieving world, and the world still waiting for hope.

WHY UMCOR SUNDAY MATTERS

The need for a faithful, organized, compassionate response remains urgent. UMCOR and Global Ministries describe their humanitarian work as disaster relief and recovery, migrant and refugee support, environmental protection, agriculture, and food security. Their impact included responses to humanitarian crises worldwide, such as floods, tropical storms, tornadoes, migration events, civil unrest, and fires.

UMCOR continues to respond to national disasters in which communities and counties experienced loss of life and disrupted livelihoods for years. UMCOR responds with grants that supported immediate relief through Early Response Teams (ERTs) and emergency supplies.

UMCOR's work also remained connected to long-term recovery from hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, fires, and winter storms. Beyond the United States, UMCOR's global witness continues among migrants, refugees, and communities impacted by war, displacement, hunger, and climate-related disasters. Global Ministries names ongoing suffering in places such as Gaza, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ukraine, and Sudan as part of the world's critical humanitarian reality.

This is why UMCOR Sunday matters. Long before disasters strike, refugees seek safety, or communities begin rebuilding after crisis, the Church prepares. The UMCOR Sunday offering provides the foundation that sustains UMCOR's ministry by helping cover its administrative costs. Because these essential operating expenses are supported through this Special Sunday, every gift given to a designated UMCOR project throughout the year can be used for its intended purpose—bringing relief, recovery, and hope directly to those in need.

This is connectional giving at work. Together, congregations across The United Methodist Church make it possible for UMCOR to be ready before emergencies happen, to respond quickly when they do, and to remain alongside communities through the long journey of recovery. Whether responding to natural disasters, supporting migrants and refugees, strengthening food security, advancing sustainable agriculture, or caring for vulnerable communities around the world, UMCOR's ministry is rooted in a Church that chooses to prepare before the need arises.

One congregation could never meet every need created by every storm, conflict, famine, or humanitarian crisis. But together, through our connection, we become an unconditional witness of Christ's compassion. Together, we become love organized. Together, we become mercy with hands and feet.

SPECIAL SUNDAY



SERMON STARTER
UMCOR SUNDAY

LOVE IN REAL TIME

In John 3, Jesus speaks of being "lifted up" so that the world might see the saving love of God. UMCOR Sunday invites the church to lift up Christ not only with our words, but with our witness. We lift up Christ when relief supplies reach a family after a flood. We lift up Christ when a refugee is welcomed with dignity. We lift up Christ when disaster case managers walk with survivors for months and years, not just days. We lift up Christ when churches prepare before the storm, serve during the crisis, and remain after the cameras leave.

That is love in the flesh, love in real time.

But why does the church do this work? Because suffering is not a verdict. When disaster strikes, it's tempting to ask what someone did to deserve it — whether they were careless, or ungodly, or simply unlucky. Scripture won't let us go there. When Jesus's disciples asked whether a man was born blind because of his own sin or his parents' (John 9:2–3), Jesus set that logic aside entirely. Disaster is never God's judgment; it is simply loss. God's response to loss is always compassion, never condemnation. UMCOR stands on that same ground.

That conviction shapes who we serve and why. Jesus never asked about someone's faith, nationality, or worthiness before healing them, feeding them, or sitting with them. His love was never conditional, and neither is ours. God calls the church to respond to suffering wherever we find it, without regard to race, religion, gender, or nationality, because God's love is not rationed to the deserving. It is offered fully, to everyone, everywhere.

UMCOR Sunday reminds us that generosity is not passive. Generosity moves. Generosity prepares. Generosity crosses borders. Generosity stays for the long haul. Generosity does not ask, "Who deserves help?" Generosity asks, "Where is Christ calling us to serve?"

CREATED FOR GOOD WORKS

Ephesians 2 teaches us that we are saved by grace, not by works. But grace never leaves us unchanged. Grace creates people who do good works. Grace forms Churches that respond. Grace builds disciples who do not look away from suffering.

When we give to UMCOR Sunday, we do more than support disaster response—we provide the operational foundation that makes UMCOR's entire ministry possible. The UMCOR Sunday offering helps cover UMCOR's administrative costs, ensuring that 100% of gifts given throughout the year to designated projects can be directed to those specific ministries, whether disaster response, refugee assistance, sustainable agriculture, food security, or other humanitarian efforts.

This is management with purpose. This is connectional giving. This is the church saying our compassion must be more than an emotion; it must be equipped, trained, resourced, and ready.

THE CHURCH THAT SHOWS UP

The world does not need a church that only speaks of love. The world needs a church that demonstrates love. A church that shows up in the mountains after hurricanes. A church that shows up in communities after tornadoes. A church that shows up with refugees and migrants. A church that shows up in places of hunger, environmental crisis, and long-term recovery.

UMCOR helps The United Methodist Church show up with integrity, humility, and hope.

So this UMCOR Sunday, we are invited to give with bold faith. We are invited to remember that our offering is not simply a donation. It is discipleship. It is an act of worship. It is a public witness that God's love is still at work in the Body of Christ.

Together, our generosity fuels hope.

Together, we are united in impact.

Together, we embody God's love.

By Rev. Dr. Stephanie Moore Hand,
Western North Carolina Conference Evangelist