

**UMCOR
SUNDAY**

SERMON STARTER

SERMON



Open Hearts. Open Minds. Open Doors.

The people of The United Methodist Church®

SERMON STARTER

AMBASSADORS FOR CHRIST

On UMCOR Sunday, consider shaping your sermon around this theme based on lectionary texts for the Fourth Sunday in Lent in Year C (2 Corinthians 5:16-21). It can be adapted for whichever Sunday your church celebrates UMCOR Sunday. The sermon starter is designed to coordinate with the UMCOR Sunday “Ambassadors for Christ” children’s activity, liturgy, offering talk, children’s message and children’s bulletin.

(Preacher may share a story of how your community has been helped by or served with UMCOR. Or use the following illustration.)

Last April, hail pummeled the small town of D’Hanis, Texas. While the larger surrounding communities received media coverage and relief from disaster response teams, the people in D’Hanis reached out to help one another. But flood water and high winds caused extensive damage to cars and homes and people began to wonder how to address the magnitude of the situation.

When UMCOR issued an emergency grant to the Rio Texas Annual Conference, Dr. Eugene Hileman, the disaster response coordinator, led a team to partner with the residents of D’Hanis. UMCOR was the only outside organization in that community.

Ambassadors for Christ. New creation.

In his letter to the church in Corinth, Paul is addressing a different kind of disaster. The people are in spiritual crisis as they bicker with him and with one another. Paul’s experiences



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of God's transformational power through Jesus shape his words that urge the church to reconciliation and to claim their place in the Jesus story as his ambassadors.

We are in the season of Lent, a period of time when we are invited to examine our lives. We are called to repent, to turn around, from those activities that pull us away from God. And the more we act as ambassadors for Jesus, the more we experience personal transformation.

Friends, where in your life can you strengthen your sense of reconciliation with God and God's creation so that you can be a strong representative for Christ?

Who are the people around you and what are the situations where your loving response transcends that crisis and chaos? Your actions as a follower of Christ can bring a sense of peace and hope.

As United Methodists, we reflect John Wesley's theological statement, "there is no holiness but social holiness."

True transformation and new creation that represents kingdom building happen in community. As a church, with the movement of the Holy Spirit, we become a new creation in Christ, more closely reflecting his perfect love to our neighbors, making space for Divine grace to grow.

One of the ways that we serve as ambassadors for Christ is through UMCOR. When UMCOR responds to a disaster, our gifts are part of that response.

UMCOR offers practical resources, but as an organization that is compelled by Christ, UMCOR also offers a ministry of presence. When an UMCOR team shows up in a community, they bring a spirit of hope to people who are in crisis. UMCOR often stays in communities long after

the media has stopped talking about the disaster. They work not only to address immediate needs but also stay to help the community determine how to best rebuild.

California-Nevada Annual Conference disaster response coordinator Sonja Edd-Bennett says, "We are touching people when they are at their most raw and vulnerable... We bring a caring Christian

"There is no holiness but social holiness."

—JOHN WESLEY



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presence and walk alongside them so that one day they will be able to walk forward on their own.”

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So many are living in a Good Friday world, overwhelmed by the impact of natural and human-caused disasters. *Will you remind them that Easter*

Sunday is coming? The resurrection promise is real. Jesus is with us. He is with us when we pray, when we listen, when we bring a casserole or set up a food pantry and in the rebuilding of homes and livelihoods. Jesus is with us through organizations like UMCOR that extend God’s love on behalf of the church. What an amazing gift it is to partner with God through UMCOR. I hope you will join us.

