

# 2013 CHRISTIAN HOME MONTH

PLANNING RESOURCES FOR CONGREGATIONS & CONFERENCES

## CHRISTIAN HOME MONTH QUADRENNIAL THEMES FOR 2013-2016

2013 : Families Called to Love

2015 : Families Called to Justice

2014 : Families Called to Peace

2016 : Families Called to Hope

## FAMILIES

*Many Forms, Common Faith!*

# Called to Love



## INTRODUCTION

The *Christian Home Month Resource* is for family ministry leaders, Family Life Council chairpersons/coordinators, family leaders and family ministries teams in local congregations. It is designed to help local congregations develop and strengthen faith in the home; celebrate and support Christian families in their faith journey, and celebrate Christian Home Month. Although Christian Home Month is typically celebrated during the month of May, congregations may choose any month of the year to focus on the Christian home and its key role as a center for faith formation.

The 2013 Christian Home Month theme is: "Families called to Love." Look at Deuteronomy 6:6-9. Here we are reminded to love God and to keep these words throughout the day in visible ways. Through Jesus' words in John 13:34, we hear the commandment to love one another. As we are called to show love individually, we are called as disciples to show love in our homes and with those we call family.

You can begin addressing the theme, Families Called to Love, by creating a Family Ministry Team to pray for families in your congregation and in your community. Through their prayer

and discernment, ask them to help the congregation identify ways families in the congregation and in the community could

become more loving. Let this be their only task. Ask those recruited to intentionally pray for every family in the church during the month of May (or whichever month you choose for Christian Home Month). Ask them to lead the congregation in prayer for families in your community. Ask the family ministry team to provide the congregation with information about the possibilities for ministry to families in the community.

As you prepare to observe Christian Home Month, lift up love in the family. During the month and throughout the rest of the year provide programs, forums, parenting classes, worship opportunities, learning activities and times of prayer for supporting families in their faith journeys. As God intended, the home is a place for living in the light of God's love and daily practicing the Christian faith.

MaryJane Pierce Norton, Associate General Secretary  
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General Board of Discipleship, The United Methodist Church



## WORSHIP SERVICE RESOURCES

The following helps are suggested for use in worship for celebrating Christian Home Sunday. For additional resources, consult the *United Methodist Book of Worship*.

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### Call to Worship:

**Leader:** We come together to praise God who is the source of our life and our love.

**People:** We come to celebrate and support families who practice love in their homes and communities.

**Leader:** We come praying for families who feel no love for themselves or for others.

**All:** Let us worship, trusting in God's love and mercy. Praise be to God!

**Hymns:** Choose hymns that best fit your worship service:

"Happy the Home When God is There", #445, *The United Methodist Hymnal* (UMH)

"O Lord, May Church and Home Combine", #695, UMH

"The Gift of Love", #408, UMH

"When Love is Found", #643, UMH

"I Was There to Hear Your Borne Cry", #2051, *The Faith We Sing* (TFWS)

"Sacred the Body", #2228, TFWS

"Fill Us with Your Love, O Lord", #3005, *Worship & Song* (W&S)

"Love Lifted Me", #3101, W&S

"Welcome", #3152, W&S

### Scripture Readings

Lectionary readings for the day may be used, or you may choose from the following:

Old Testament: Deuteronomy 6:4-9

Psalter: Psalm 85, #806 UMH

Gospel: John 13:34-35

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

### Prayer for Families:

"Gracious God, who created all of humankind and showed to us the importance of relationships with one another, we commend to your care all the families of this congregation, community, and world. We pray that each home may be a home where love is felt. We pray for homes where, instead of love, there are households of hurt and abuse and suffering. We pray for children, youth, and adults, recognizing the importance of and the gift of every age as we grow. May your grace be present to all. Grant us wisdom to know where there is no love, courage to act out of love for others, and peace to rest in your mercy. Help us live so that the commandments of love for you and love for others are shown in the ways we live together. Amen."

### A Litany for Families

**Leader:** Gracious God, you created us to dwell in community. We thank you for the witness of families in the scripture who help us know we do not have to be perfect.

**People:** Help us remember the witness of the scripture, O God.

**Leader:** You created us to follow your laws. We thank you for the commandments to love you and to love others.

**People:** Help us recall your words of love, O God.

**Leader:** You gave us Jesus to teach us ways to live in community with one another.

**People:** Help us follow the path that Jesus has shown, O God.

**Leader:** You created us to act in ways that help those around us know the true meaning of love.

**People:** Help us act upon your words of love, O God.

**Leader:** For all families, bless us in our struggle to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

**People:** Hear our prayer, O God, through Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.



## CALLED TO LOVE: FAMILY DEVOTIONAL TIMES

- **Make a Love Chain.** Use strips of construction paper to make a chain of links. On each link write a short Bible verse about love, the name of a person you love and who loves you, or an action to do to share God's love. Decorate your table with the chain as a reminder of God's ongoing and everlasting love for each of us.
- **Family Night.** Set aside a regular time for sharing activities of family fun together. You could do the same activity each time (play board games, cook special treats, volunteer as a family in service to others, learn about people who live different lives than yours.) Or each Family Night could be planned by a different family member, with the activity based on agreed-upon criteria.
- **Hymn of the Month.** Select a hymn to learn as a family. Sing it at each meal, before bed, while driving to school, or at other times. If there are children in the family, keep the youngest in mind as you consider content and length.
- **Prayer of the Month.** Take time to think about and write down your thoughts for a prayer about love to be prayed at mealtime. Be sure to include persons who are less fortunate, persons you are thankful to know, ways to show love, and a reminder of how much God loves each one in your family. Family members could write the prayer together or take turns writing a "Family Prayer for this month."
- **Refrigerator Reminders.** Post on the refrigerator a scripture passage, line from a hymn, inspirational thought, or brief prayer. Change the passage each Saturday. Place this at a level that all in the family can see when they open the refrigerator.
- **Scripture/Prayer/Thought for the Day Cards.** Buy a spiral notebook of index cards; write a favorite scripture

verse, short prayer, or thought for the day on each card. Each day turn over one of the cards to reveal a scripture verse, short prayer, or thought for the day about love to read aloud. Illustrate each card.

### • **Idea Starters for Conversations Around the Table or at Any Time:**

- What did Jesus mean in saying, "Love your neighbor as yourself"?
- Name a kindness you would describe as an act of love. What other kindness could be described as an act of love?
- Talk about an experience when you realized that God loves you.
- Talk about a time when you did not feel loved.
- What is one of your first memories of being loved?
- What are some loving experiences you have had at church – in Sunday school, worship, on retreat, during a special program, etc.
- Complete one of these sentences (and create your own):

*God is with me when....*

*A person I know who shares God's love is....*

*My favorite story about love in the Bible is....*

*I like to be with my family when we....*

- **Establish a Family Covenant for Love.** The covenant can be renewed every three months; however, the basic elements of the covenant stay intact. The promise of love, forgiveness, acceptance, truthfulness, growth and witness is the basis of the covenant.

### FAMILY COVENANT FOR LOVE

This covenant will be in effect from \_\_\_\_\_ (beginning date) to \_\_\_\_\_ (ending date)

**In order that our family may be one that promotes love for one another, we promise one another to:**

1. Seek God's presence through regular Bible study, reflection and prayer together.
2. Love one another unconditionally – loving the person even while naming behaviors that might need to be changed by a person.
3. Seek ways to praise and lift up actions of others in the family when they have shared God's love and shown love for others.
4. Learn about those places in our community that provide for families in times of need: programs addressing abuse in the family, food pantries, programs providing shelter, hospitals that provide for families when a loved one is ill. As a family we will decide on a way to offer service to one of these places.
5. Share at least one family meal per week. For those in our family who are not in the same location, we will decide on a common day for a meal each week as we dine separately, pray for one another, or call one another and pray together by phone.
6. Seek out stories of love at church, in the newspaper, on the internet, at school, at work, or at home and tell these stories to one another.

Signed by: \_\_\_\_\_

ALL FAMILY MEMBERS SIGN THE COVENANT.



## CHRISTIAN HOME MONTH PLANNING CALENDAR

### 2013

**APRIL:** Begin plans for celebrating Christian Home Month in worship, in small group gatherings, with a church wide meal, and in homes. Ask families to bring to the church pictures and written statements about how they practice love for God and love for one another at home and in their communities. Use these to create a bulletin board and put in the church newsletter and bulletin.

**MAY:** Carry out plans made for celebrating the Christian Home. Recognize women in the congregation who are mothers in families and mothers in faith. Celebrate Pentecost Sunday. Invite congregation members to wear red on May 19. Make a Pentecost bulletin board drawing or create a poster of a large tree. Ask individuals and families to add to the tree the names of those in their congregation who have helped the church grow.

**JUNE:** Recognize men in the congregation who are fathers in families and fathers in faith. Publish a devotional guide for families to use on vacation. Include scripture, meditations, and prayers. Celebrate graduates. Invite each graduate to name someone in the congregation who has been a guide for them in faith.

**JULY:** Plan a Fix-Up day at church and invite families to help with projects of beautification for the church and the church grounds. Recruit a leader and set up a Companions in Christ study group using the study, *The Way of Blessedness*, Upper Room Books, Participant's Book by Marjorie J. Thompson and Leader's Guide by Stephen D. Bryant.

**AUGUST:** Have an "end of summer" ice cream social. Ask church members to bring school supplies that can be given to local schools for families who cannot afford to buy supplies for their children. Pray in worship for teachers and for students as they begin a new school year.

**SEPTEMBER:** Hold a parenting class for parents and grandparents. Use the Upper Room resource *Parents & Grandparents as Spiritual Guides: Nurturing Children of the Promise* by Betty Shannon Cloyd. Contact local hospitals to identify needs of new parents. Invite congregational members to bring in items needed by the hospitals for new babies and their families.

**OCTOBER:** Celebrate the Children's Sabbath on the second Sunday of October. Call the Office of Children's Ministries, General Board of Discipleship 1-877-899-2780, ext. 1762 for instructions on how to get resources.

**NOVEMBER:** Provide a bulletin insert with prayers for families to use in celebrating Thanksgiving. Plan needed resources for celebrating Advent and Christmas in the home. Provide a list of places needing volunteers and who would welcome families volunteering together for Thanksgiving celebrations for those who are without food and shelter.

**DECEMBER:** Offer an Advent workshop for families. Invite individuals to bring to the church one Advent/Christmas decoration they use in their home and talk about why this is important to them. Provide a devotional guide for lighting the Advent wreath and praying together at home.

### 2014

**JANUARY:** If you haven't yet used the "Family Covenant for Living Together in Love", invite families to do so as a New Year Resolution. Publish a list of "beat the winter doldrums" ideas. Include such ideas as playing a board game with the family; telling one another stories of ancestors; having a star-gazing night; picking a favorite Bible story and acting it out.

**FEBRUARY:** Celebrate Marriage Ministries on the Sunday nearest Valentine's Day. Recognize anniversaries, engagements, and milestones in the lives of couples in the congregation. Plan a retreat for couples.

Use the Upper Room resource, "Love Never Ends" as a study for couples.

**MARCH:** Sponsor a Pancake Dinner the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday or encourage families to make pancakes together at home. Use the information found in the Family Ministry section of [www.gbod.org](http://www.gbod.org) to talk about the meaning of pancakes before beginning Lent. Observe Ash Wednesday on March 5. Use the Family Guide for Lent found on the Family Ministries pages of [www.gbod.org](http://www.gbod.org).

## RESOURCES THAT SUPPORT MINISTRIES WITH FAMILIES

The Christian Home Month Resource, published annually by The General Board of Discipleship is a manual designed for use by leaders with families. Mailed to every congregation, copies are also available by contacting:

Family & Life Span Ministries Office  
General Board of Discipleship  
P.O. Box 340003  
Nashville, TN 37203-0003  
Phone: 615-340-7170  
Fax: 615-340-7011  
E-Mail: [mnorton@gbod.org](mailto:mnorton@gbod.org)

Additional resources, ideas, and suggestions for Family Ministries can be found online at <http://www.gbod.org/site/c.nhLRJ2PMKsG/b.4104415/k.C87D/Families.htm>. Watch the Family Ministries web page each month for articles, events, and resources to support the family.



# RETREAT MODEL: CALLED TO LOVE

1. **The congregation prays for the retreat**, the participants, and the team that will plan the retreat

2. **A retreat planning team is created**, made up of 3-5 people in the congregation.

3. **The retreat team meet and:**

- Chooses a date and location
- Decides on the study to use
- Designs and plans the retreat
- Prepares a budget
- Secures a location
- Recruits leaders
- Plans times for prayer and worship
- Plans food or arranges with the location to handle food needs
- Plans an offering for an organization in the community that has as its mission helping families become places of peace rather than violence
- Designs a flyer, or announcement, including registration form and information about fees, dates, and location



4. **The team prepares for publicity and promotion.** Someone from the team prepares information and distributes it through the church newsletter, e-newsletters, worship bulletins, bulletin boards, and other avenues in the congregation. Regular notices, with sign-up forms, should appear beginning six months prior to the retreat and leading up to the week prior to the retreat.

5. **The team collects supplies needed for the retreat.** Those needed if following this retreat model: songbooks/sheets; Bibles; board games; sports equipment; camera(s); a copy of *Dancing with Words* by Ray Buckley (Discipleship Resources, 2003) for each retreat leader; one poster board per small group; magazines, scissors, glue; modeling clay or play dough for each small group; one large paper bag for each small group with each containing 3 sheets of construction paper, a roll of masking or painters tape, 6 markers of assorted colors, a skein of yarn, scissors, 4 paper plates, and 6 plastic cups.

## FRIDAY

4:00 – 6:00 p.m. **Registration**

6:30 – 7:00 p.m. **Dinner**

(A served meal or bring-your-own-bag-supper)

7:15 – 7:30 p.m. **Gathering Time.** Share announcements and Opening Prayer. Sing familiar camp songs, favorite hymns and praise choruses.

7:30 – 9:00 p.m. **Divide participants into “family” groups of 4-6** (mixing up actual family members with others in the congregation). Ask each group to come up with a list of stories it enjoys that illustrate love for God and/or love for others. Each group should have one story for each category: 1) Old Testament story; 2) New Testament story; 3) Story about a church member or of something that happened in your church; and 4) Favorite “folk” story or a story from a book or movie. After the family groups have agreed upon the four stories they would like to share with the larger group, they need to decide on three pieces of information for each story that they can give to the larger group to help them guess the stories. For instance, if the group’s story from the Old Testament is “Noah and the Ark”, the three pieces of information could be: 1) A dove is important in this story. 2) An extended family was involved in this story. 3) The rainbow is a sign of a promise given in this story. When the total group gathers, each family group can lead in getting the other families to guess the stories.

9:00 – 9:30 p.m. **Read or tell one of the stories** found in *Dancing with Words* as an illustration of love. Lead the group in a time of prayer, sharing joys and concerns, and singing together.

9:30 – 10:00 p.m. **Snack and Game Time.** Share snacks. Have board games available, music to listen to and other activities for all ages. If the setting allows, have a campfire or take a flashlight walk.

## SATURDAY

8:00 – 9:00 a.m. **Breakfast**

9:00 – 9:30 a.m. **Morning Worship.** Lead the group in singing, scripture and prayer.

9:30 – 10:30 a.m. **Ask the participants to reassemble in the same “family groups” as the previous night.** Provide a Bible for each group. Distribute the paper sacks with the items prepared in them. Ask each family group to choose either an Old Testament story or a New Testament story from the night before. The groups are then to use the items provided in the paper bags as props for retelling the story they selected to the larger group.

10:30 – 11:00 a.m. **Break**

11:00 – 11:30 a.m. **Ask each group to present their Bible stories**

Noon – 1:00 p.m. **Lunch**

1:00 – 5:30 p.m. **Afternoon Fun.** Encourage naps. Provide walking/hiking trails maps, recreational/sports equipment, arts and crafts.

5:30 – 6:30 p.m. **Dinner**

6:30 – 7:30 p.m. **Ask the participants to reassemble in their “family groups.”** Ask each group to go back to the story it has chosen regarding the church or a church member. Ask each group to create scenes or a picture illustrating the story they have chosen

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on the poster board provided. Instruct the family groups to lift up ways this story illustrates love that is found in your church.

**7:30 – 8:15 p.m. Gather the group together** and allow each family group to share the picture or scenes of love they have created.

**8:15 – 8:30 p.m. Break**

**8:30 – 9:00 p.m. Lead the group in sharing and praying about their joys and concerns.** Ask those who wish to name a song, or a

scripture verse, or something they have seen this day that helped them understand God's peace.

### SUNDAY

**8:00 – 9:00 a.m. Breakfast**

**9:00 – 10:00 a.m. Closing worship**

**10:00 – 11:00 a.m. Clean up and Journey Home**

## CONGREGATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR CHRISTIAN HOME MONTH

**Reprint the Family Devotional Times material** in your church newsletter or place it on your web site.

**Plan a family fun time at church.** Include a meal and use the time there to make the refrigerator reminders or scripture/prayer/thought day cards.

**Using the Planning Calendar,** list one suggestion a month that details how families can engage in activities of love.

**Highlight families in your church,** publishing pictures (with their permission) in your church newsletter or e-letter of families showing love to others in your community by providing meals, distributing clothing, visiting those in retirement homes or working on community service projects.

**Encourage families to adopt** the Family Covenant for Love and carry out the practices for at least a month. In worship, pray for those who commit to the covenant, and recognize the fulfillment of their commitment at the end of the month with a prayer of thanks.