

# 2016 CHRISTIAN HOME MONTH

PLANNING RESOURCES FOR CONGREGATIONS & CONFERENCES



## Families: Many Forms, Common Faith! Called to Hope

**T**he *Christian Home Month* resource is for family ministry leaders, ministry teams, and council chairpersons/coordinators in local congregations. It is designed to help local congregations develop and strengthen faith in the home and to 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.

Our theme for 2016 is *Families Called to Hope*. We live in a tumultuous time; the television news, Internet, and other forms of media inundate us with images and stories of violence, political controversy, inequality, and hate. It seems that sin, violence, and corruption surround us and take all the joy out of living. We have much to fear. Yet, we know that as Christians we are called to be a people of hope. We hope for a better world where everyone will feel and experience God's love, peace, justice, and grace.

All people—no matter their age or place on their spiritual journey—are susceptible to the fear, tragedy, and devastation that our culture seems to focus on. Many families live in situations that seem less than hopeful: job loss; addiction to drugs or alcohol; abuse; chronic illness; death of a family member. Think of those families separated because of military service, incarceration, or financial circumstances. Think about families who are simply worn out from balancing work, church, and

home responsibilities. How can the body of Christ be a beacon of hope to all who despair? How can we help cultivate a culture full of hope for our families, our church, and our world?

We can start by sharing and modeling ways for our families to practice hopeful living in the home and the world. We offer hope to our communities by:

- providing clothing, food, or shelter for those without these basics;
- providing classes on parenting, finance management, and English as a second language;
- offering places of belonging to children, youth, and adults.

This *Christian Home Month* resource, *Families: Called to Hope*, includes worship service resources, a retreat plan, and devotional activities for families as they foster a spirit of hope in their homes. We trust that you will find something in this resource that will inspire, encourage, and affirm you as you continue in this important work to which you are called.

## CHRISTIAN HOME MONTH QUADRENNIAL THEMES 2013-2016

2013: Families Called to Love

2014: Families Called to Peace

2015: Families Called to Justice

**2016: Families Called to Hope**

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# CALLED TO HOPE: WORSHIP SERVICE RESOURCES

*The following helps are suggested for use in worship for celebrating Christian Home Month or Family Life Sunday as part of a worship service. For additional resources, see *The United Methodist Book of Worship*.*

## Call to Worship

**Leader:** The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.

**People:** We come, giving thanks to God, who is our light and hope.

**Leader:** When we are tired, afraid, or downtrodden, God is our comforter and our strength.

**People:** We come, seeking God's compassion, comfort, and peace.

**Leader:** When we are afraid, God calls us by name and leads us to safety.

**People:** We come, seeking God's protection and guidance.

**Leader:** Christ calls us to live in hope, sharing Christ's love with a hurting world.

**People:** We come, seeking ways to share Christ's light with others.

**Leader:** Come Holy Spirit and rest upon us.

**All:** Come Holy Spirit and help us to be people of hope.

## Hymns

*(Choose which hymns most fit your worship service)*

- "Amazing Grace," 378, *UMH*
- "Hymn of Promise," 707, *UMH*
- "My Hope is Built," 368, *UMH*
- "O God, Our Help in Ages Past," 117, *UMH*
- "Light of the World," 2204, *The Faith We Sing*
- "The Family Prayer Song," 2188, *The Faith We Sing*
- "Song of Hope," 2186, *The Faith We Sing*
- "Amazing Grace" ("My Chains Are Gone"), 3104, *Worship & Song*

## Scripture Readings

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

- Old Testament: Isaiah 9:2-7
- Psalter: Psalm 65, Psalter 789, *UMH*
- Gospel: John 14:15-21
- Epistle: Revelation 22:1-6

## Prayer for Families

Gracious God, who created the families of the earth, we commend to your care all of the families in this congregation, community, and the world. We pray that each home may be a place where hope gives light to life. We pray for those homes where there is no hope—where there is danger, violence, fear, loneliness, hurtful words, and unceasing activity without reason. We pray for children, youth, and adults. We pray for parents, stepparents, and foster parents. We pray for couples. We pray for those who are alone. We pray for those who have formed families from friendship. May your grace be present to all. Grant us courage to look for signs of hope in our homes, in our communities, and in our world. Grant us hope, so that in times when we see only the mean actions of human to human, we remember your presence and the promise of your kingdom on earth and in heaven. Amen.

## A Litany for Families

**Leader:** Let us pray...

**People:** For families where children, youth, and adults are nurtured to grow as God intended us to grow.

**Leader:** Let us pray...

**People:** For families who do not have shelter, nourishing food to eat, clean water to drink, and clothes to wear.

**Leader:** Let us pray...

**People:** For families who struggle with abuse, violence, fear, and stress.

**Leader:** Let us pray...

**People:** For families who practice the faith together—reading Scripture, praying together, worshiping together, and seeking to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

**All:** O God, we are your children. Help us remember the messages of justice, peace, hope, and love in such a way that those messages may be present in our homes, in our communities, and in our world. AMEN.

# CALLED TO HOPE: FAMILY DEVOTIONAL TIMES

**PAY ATTENTION** (*How does your family experience God?*)

**Symbol to Look for: Rainbows**

**Rainbows** remind us of God's promise to Noah. When you see a rainbow, say: "God, thank you for giving us hope. Help us share your hope and love with others."

**Virtue to Practice: Hope**

**I Wonder...**

- When have you felt hopeful?
- How will you share hope with others?

**God Encounters:**

- **Journal:** When you feel hopeful, write it down, or take or draw a picture of your experience.
- **Share:** Tell others when you experience hope. Share your story online using #famfaithform.

**TAKE TIME** (*Read and pray together*)

**Read Psalm 65 together.** Take turns reading a few verses every day. Then ask the questions listed below.

**Wondering Questions:**

- What is your favorite part of Psalm 65?
- How do you experience God in Psalm 65?
- What have you learned from Psalm 65?
- What do you wonder about?

**Recommended Book:** *Circles of Hope* by Karen Lynn Williams; (Visit [UMCdiscipleship.org/christianhomemonth2016](http://UMCdiscipleship.org/christianhomemonth2016) for additional titles)

**Family Prayer**

God, we give you thanks because you have done and continue to do amazing things! Thank you for giving us hope for a better world. Help me to follow you as I bring hope to others. Amen.

**DO HOLY WORK TOGETHER**

**Love God**

Remember your blessings, individually and as a family. Eat dinner together as a family. Go around the table and ask family members to share when they felt hopeful that week. As each person names a blessing, write it on a slip of paper. Place the paper in a cup or a jar. When someone in the family has a hopeless day, take a slip from the blessing cup and read it to remind one another of hope. Thank God for these experiences. Ask God to give hope and blessings to others. Name persons you know who need God's hope.

**Love Neighbor**

Identify people in your community who are in need of hope (someone who just lost a friend, pet, family member; or one of your church members who is no longer able to come to weekly services). Take them a handmade card, meal, or some other symbol of God's hope. You might also choose to invite them to join you for a walk, a trip to get ice cream, or another one of your family activities.

**Bless One Another**

Make the shape of a cross on your family member's forehead or hand while saying these words:

*(Make a vertical line.)* God loves you.

*(Make a horizontal line.)* Christ is with you.

*(Look your family member in his/her eyes.)* The Holy Spirit moves through you.

*(Hug your family member.)* As you share God's hope with the world.

## FAMILY COVENANT FOR HOPE

Create a covenant together as you promise to grow and share God's hope. Every month, take time to ask: "How have we lived into our covenant?" Celebrate how you shared God's hope with one another. Then make any changes that might be needed for the next month.

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

*In order that our family may be one that promotes hopeful living with one another, we promise one another to:*

1. Spend time eating, playing, and praying together.
2. Look for hope in our world and share these stories and God's hope with one another.
3. Bless one another every day.
4. Learn about organizations that offer hope to the hopeless. As a family, we will find one way to help them with their work.

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

*All family members sign the covenant.*

# CHRISTIAN HOME MONTH: PLANNING CALENDAR

## 2016

**APRIL:** Begin plans for celebrating Christian Home Month in worship, in small-group gatherings, with a churchwide meal, and in homes. Ask families to bring to the church pictures and written statements about how they participate in living hopefully. Use these to create a bulletin board and put in the church newsletter and bulletin. Celebrate Earth Day. Discuss ways to bring hope to the earth by caring for the environment.

**MAY:** Carry out plans made for celebrating the Christian home. Recognize women in the congregation who are mothers in families and mothers in faith. On May 15, Pentecost, have a “wear red” day and recognize those in the congregation who model the presence of God. Host a workshop on family friendly computer sites.

**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.

**JULY:** Plan a service project that allows families to help the homeless or hungry in your community. Recruit a leader and set up an intergenerational study using the book, *Let the Children Give* by Delia Halverson (available from Upper Room Books).

**AUGUST:** Have an “end of summer” ice cream social. Ask church members to bring school supplies that can be

donated to local schools for families who cannot afford to buy supplies for their children. Have a “Blessing of the Backpacks” as part of one worship service before school begins.

**SEPTEMBER:** Hold a parenting class on *Parents and Grandparents as Spiritual Guides* by Betty Shannon Cloyd (available from Cokesbury) to help parents and grandparents reflect on their spiritual lives and how they guide their children.

**OCTOBER:** Celebrate the Children’s Sabbath on the second Sunday of October. Call the Office of Children and Intergenerational Ministries, Discipleship Ministries, 1-877-899-2780, ext. 1760, for instructions on how to get resources. Sponsor a “trunk or treat” in your community. Invite church members to decorate their cars, park in the church parking lot, and distribute treats.

**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 that would welcome families volunteering together to help those who are without food and shelter during the holiday.

**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.

## 2017

**JANUARY:** If you haven’t yet used the Covenant of Hope, invite families to do so as a New Year’s 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 stargazing 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. Encourage families to have pancakes the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday, remembering that with Ash Wednesday we begin Lent and a time of study and self-denial.

**MARCH:** Begin plans for celebrating Christian Home Month in May. Call the Office of Children and Intergenerational Ministries, Discipleship Ministries (1-877-899-2780, ext. 1760, and request any new resources available for support of family ministries.

**APRIL:** Easter is April 16. Publish ideas for celebrating Holy Week and Easter in the home. Include prayers, meditations, and activities that help focus on Jesus’ resurrection. Welcome spring. Hold a Family Work Day at church. Invite those of all ages to come and clean areas of the church that might not have been cleaned for a while. Sort through toys and supplies, removing those that are broken or no longer useable.

## RESOURCES THAT SUPPORT MINISTRIES WITH FAMILIES

The Christian Home Month Resource, published annually by Discipleship Ministries, is a manual designed for use by leaders with families. Mailed to every congregation, copies are also available by contacting the Children and Intergenerational Ministries Office, General Board of Discipleship, P.O. Box 340003, Nashville, TN 37203-0003. Phone 615-340-1760. Fax: 615-340-7011. E-Mail: [igministry@umcdiscipleship.org](mailto:igministry@umcdiscipleship.org).

Additional resources, ideas, and suggestions for Christian Home Month 2016 and family faith formation can be found online at <http://www.umcdiscipleship.org/leadership-resources/intergenerational-family-ministries>. Watch the Family Ministries web page each month for articles, events, and resources to support the family.

# CALLED TO HOPE: RETREAT MODEL

1. The congregation prays for the retreat, the participants, and the planning team.
2. A retreat planning team is created, made up of 6-8 people in the congregation.
3. The retreat team meets and plans the retreat:
  - Chooses a date and secures a location
  - Decides on the retreat schedule, including times for prayer and worship
  - Prepares a budget
  - Recruits leaders
  - Arranges all food needs
  - Plans an offering for an organization in the community that helps families in need
  - Designs a flyer that includes a registration form and information about fees, dates, and location
4. 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 the following supplies: Hymnals or song sheets; *Bibles*; children's books on hope; board games, sports equipment, camera(s), one poster board per small group, magazines, scissors, glue, modeling clay or play dough for each small group, various props for skits.

## 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. Teach the group “Hymn of Promise” (*The United Methodist Hymnal*, 707).

**7:30–8:30 P.M.** – Divide participants into “family” groups of 4-6 (mixing up actual family members with others in the congregation). Ask each group to create a poster of a hopeful community, either drawing what group members feel needs to be included or using pictures and illustrations from the magazines provided. Ask each group to then decide on the 3 most essential features that must be present in a community for it to be a hopeful place to live. Ask each group to talk about its community, including what the group decided were the essentials for hopeful living.

**8:30–9:00 P.M.** – Read a children's book that speaks of hope. See the list of books at [UMCdiscipleship.org/christianhomemonth2016](http://UMCdiscipleship.org/christianhomemonth2016). Wonder together asking:

- I wonder, “How did you experience God in the story?”
- I wonder, “What was your favorite part of the story?”
- I wonder, “Where were you in the story?”
- I wonder, “What do you wonder about?”

Close by leading the group in a time of prayer, sharing joys and concerns; then sing together.

**9:00–10:00 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. Ask the groups to read John 14:15-21. Invite each family group to imagine ways of living that reflect Jesus' commandments. Ask each team to make up a skit showing how people could live, sharing Christ's light, love, and hope with others. Advise each group to talk through what group members will do and what they see as hopeful in the Scripture and their situation before moving into creating the skit.

**10:30–11:00 A.M.** – Break

**11:00–11:45 A.M.** – Ask the groups to present their skits. After each skit, ask the total group to name what was hopeful in each situation.

**NOON–1:00 P.M.** – Lunch

**1:00–5:30 P.M.** – Afternoon fun: encourage naps and recreation. Provide walking/hiking trail 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”. Read John 14:15-21 and Revelation 22:1-6. Distribute to each group modeling clay, Legos®, paper, and markers. Invite each group to create its vision of the place Jesus and/or the author of Revelation describes. What does a place where Jesus' light and love is felt and God's presence is known look like? What does it look like to live in hope? Invite each group to reflect on what a place full of hope and God's love looks like.

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**7:30–8:15 P.M.** – Gather the full group together and allow each family group to share the vision it created and share group members’ thoughts.

**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. Sing again “Hymn of Promise.” Ask those who wish to name another song, or a Scripture verse, or something they have seen this day that brought them hope.

**9:00–10:00 P.M.** – Snack and game time. Recruit volunteers to plan the ending worship service for Sunday. If weather permits, go outside for stargazing or a campfire.

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## 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

# CALLED TO HOPE: CONGREGATIONAL ACTIVITIES

- Share the “Called to Hope: Family Devotional Times” material with your church, inviting families to try the suggested activities at home.
- Each month, invite families to practice one hopeful activity listed in the Christian Home Month Planning Calendar.
- Collect stories from families about how they are living hopefully. Share these stories (with their permission) in your church newsletter or on your website.
- Enjoy a meal together at church. Place a question card on the table and invite persons to take turns answering the question: “Church Makes Me Hopeful Because....” Invite each table to make a poster that shares people’s thoughts. Display the posters in your church.
- Encourage families to adopt and live into the “Family Covenant for Hopeful Living.” Celebrate families who commit and live into this covenant in worship with a prayer of thanks.