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Week of Compassion

Long Term Accompaniment

by Josh Baird, Director of Disciples Volunteering, a partner of Week of Compassion

When hurricane winds and surging flood waters devastated their community, members of First Christian Church in Moss Point, Mississippi responded. They partnered with other community groups to help identify and meet needs. They received unsolicited donations and sifted out what was helpful, from the junk. They opened their facilities to a group of medical professionals, who offered free medical care at the church. First Christian Church also opened their doors to mission teams who came from all over the country to help. Week after week, mission teams stayed at the church. Hundreds of people slept on air mattresses scattered throughout the church building at night and served with the community recovery during the day. Through the response, the members of First Christian Church formed a unique bond with those who came from Central Christian Church in Newark, Ohio.

There were other mission teams that made repeat trips to help with the recovery, but Moss Point remained in close relationship with Central Christian even after the recovery ended. Now, the two congregations plan mission trips together, serving side by side with other communities recovering from disaster. The relationship between these two churches runs deeper than collective service. In recent years, both congregations have

faced the unexpected death of a mission team member. Each time, long-distance friends made the nearly 1,000 mile journey to be present for the memorial service. More recently, folks from Moss Point had occasion to be near Newark - so they took the fixings for a crawfish boil from Mississippi to Ohio to feast with their friends.



Members of First Christian Church and Central Christian Church pose together.

The relationship between these two congregations reflect disaster response ministry at its finest. While early relief is important after a disaster, healthy, lasting relationships develop by committing to journey with a community throughout its recovery and beyond. Week of Compassion, through partners like Disciples Volunteering, helps the Church show up when we're needed after a disaster, and stay until we're not. By offering help that is needed, when it is needed, for as long as it's needed, we honor our faith and our relationships with those facing hard times. We go where they must go, staying side by side until the recovery ends - and sometimes, even longer. Sometimes, we are blessed to continue sharing joys, and loss, and crawfish, as we journey together.

Featured Video & Resources during Special Offering (weekofcompassion.org/videos)



Discussion Prompts:

With Adults-

- The video talks about 60 million people who are "displaced." Discuss the difference between "refugees" (who make up 1/3 of the displaced population) and "internally displaced persons" (who make up the other 2/3). You may also want to clarify the distinction between "migrants" and "displaced persons."

-Displaced Persons: Persons who have fled their homes because of a threat to their lives or safety, due to armed conflict, persecution, or natural disaster.

-Internally Displaced Persons: Persons who have fled their homes but remain within their own countries because of a threat to their lives or safety, due to armed conflict, persecution, or natural disaster.

-Refugees: Persons who have fled their homes *across national borders* because of a threat to their lives or safety and are unable to return to their home countries due to a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. Persons who can prove they meet this definition are entitled to protection by international law.

-Migrants: Persons who have moved to another country to flee poverty, seek better opportunity, join family members, or for any reason other than persecution.

- Read together Matthew 2:13-23. After having watched the video, what strikes you in this story? Imagine together what might have happened if Mary, Joseph, and Jesus had been turned away at the Egyptian border.

Intergenerational-

- Select a group building challenge appropriate for your group size and session time. (Youth Activity II in the Leader's Guide is one option. Another possible activity is the stand-up challenge: first have a volunteer sit on the ground and try to stand up, keeping her feet together and without touching the ground with her hands. You might want a couple people to try. Then, have pairs sit back to back, link elbows, and try to stand up together.) Talk with the participants about how the experience was different alone and in pairs. Brainstorm as a group other challenges that are difficult to face alone.
- People who are forced to flee from their homes because of war, violence, or natural disasters have to rebuild their lives in new places. They cannot do it alone. What are some ways we can let them know they aren't alone? What are some ways we can help them rebuild their lives?

With Children-(Disclaimer: we rate this video as PG. Please review the video in advance of sharing it with children.)

- How did the first half of the video made you feel?
What about the second half of the video?
Talk with your children about how there are sad and scary things in the world, but God is always with us, and we can share what we have to help people in those situations.
- How long is 5 seconds, really?

The video starts with the statistic: "every 5 seconds a person is displaced." That is very frequent! Help kids have a sense of how quick 5 seconds really is by playing "5 Second Switch." Identify a 'goal' at either end of a large room, hall, or yard. Gather the kids in the middle of the space, facing one of the goals. On your mark, the kids will hop/walk/shuffle toward the goal. When at the 5 second mark, you call out "switch!" the kids have to switch directions and try to reach the other goal. Again, after 5 seconds, call out "switch." Repeat a few times.

For Worship:

This video is intense and can be overwhelming, but it also offers a word of hope. It confronts us with a difficult reality in our world, and inspires us to act in ways that demonstrate love and compassion. Consider pairing this video with a prayer. While pastoral prayer may be most familiar in many congregations, also appropriate would be a prayer of confession with words of assurance, which follow the same pattern of acknowledging suffering while also resting on the surety of God's faithfulness.

Prayer of Confession:

(unison or single voice)

Five seconds is but the length of a breath. Breathing in, breathing out we are reminded of your presence, God, who breathed life into us at the first. Yet, every five seconds another life is uprooted, without our notice. Another woman is forced from the land her parents and grandparents tilled. Another child is taken from a home he will remember only through stories. Forgive us, God, when we take for granted the precious gift of life you have given. Forgive us when we turn away from the suffering of our

neighbors, unwilling to share in their struggle. Forgive us, also, when we doubt the significance of our gifts and dismiss the importance of our generosity. With each breath we take, with each second that passes, rekindle your Spirit within us and restore our hearts. Amen.

Words of Assurance:

The mercies of God are new with every morning, with every moment, with every breath. Receive the grace of God and live.

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Where you built relationships with struggling neighbors



Mozambique, Drought Relief



Michigan, Water Relief



South Sudan, Humanitarian Crisis Support