

ILLINOS CONFERENCE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

1840 WESTCHESTER BOULEVARD, WESTCHESTER, IL 60154

OUR CHURCH'S WIDER MISSION

SHARING is an essential part of what God calls us to do as the people of God's church. We are called to share our joys and concerns. We are called to share our time and talents. The Church, as reflected in this text from Acts, was founded with sharing at its core.

IN THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, one of the ways we are invited to share is through our offerings to **Our Church's Wider Mission (OCWM)**. OCWM is the way, that the United Church of Christ helps distribute services, resources and expertise to all within our faith community who have a need.

- *When a church is seeking a pastor, the financial support you share, through OCWM, provides staff and resources.*
- *When a crisis strikes, the financial support you share, through OCWM, helps people pick up the pieces.*
- *When a new congregation is started, the financial support you share, through OCWM, helps staff this evangelistic mission of the Church.*
- *When a congregation is seeking resources to help revitalize their congregation, the financial support you share, through OCWM, provides staff and other resources to assist them to discover what and who God is calling them to do and to be.*
- *When persons are called to ordained ministry, the financial support you share, through OCWM, provides support for UCC related seminaries they may attend, through CUE (Chicago, United, and Eden Seminaries).*
- *When we are given the opportunity to partner with those organizations that are serving "the least of these," the financial support you share, through OCWM, gives us the ability to respond through Mission Support grants.*
- *When we need Christian education curriculum and materials, a new hymnal, new worship resources, etc., the financial support you give, through OCWM, makes publication possible.*
- *And much, much more!*

**"All who
believed were
together and
had all things in
common; they
would sell their
possessions and
goods and
distribute the
proceeds to all,
as any had
need."**

Acts 2:44-45 NRSV

The financial support your church shares, through OCWM, gives us the opportunity to have a common funding source that helps us all to do those things that we could not do as effectively by ourselves. *OCWM HELPS OUR CHURCH BE THE CHURCH.*

BUT RIGHT NOW OCWM IS FACING SOME CHALLENGES. Over the last ten years, giving to OCWM has decreased, yet the costs required to engage in ministry have continued to increase.

The financial reserves the wider church had for rainy days, such as these, have been depleted. This trend of decreased giving has caused us to make deep cuts in our ministry within the Illinois Conference and our denomination. It is possible that more cuts in program staff and sharing of resources will be required.

Whenever cuts occur that means that we have fewer resources for mission; fewer resources for ministry; fewer resources with which to support of churches; fewer resources to develop clergy and lay leadership; and fewer resources to teach and transmit our faith to a new generation of believers.

SISTERS AND BROTHERS, WE HAVE A CHALLENGE BEFORE US. However, it is a challenge we can conquer. Within our churches, let us:

- Talk about OCWM. Invite a speaker in from the Illinois Conference or from your local Association to learn more of what OCWM does.
- Increase your pledge to your local congregation and designate a portion of your increase to OCWM.
- Study, pray, and discern what God is calling you and your church to do.
- Pray, pray and pray again that, together, we will be the church that God is calling us to be.

TOGETHER, WE CAN

Transform Lives,

Strengthen Local Church Ministry,

Engage in Justice and Witness, and

Support Youth and Young Adult Ministry.



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