



May 13, 2018

STRENGTHEN THE CHURCH OFFERING



The Strengthen the Church offering supports the expansion of ministry and growth of UCC local congregations. Your support of this offering will help the UCC fulfill on its commitment to creating a just world for all by investing in new ministries and practices that meet the emerging needs of local communities.

Your 2017 Support made the following possible:

ADESE FELLOWSHIP This 12-month program maximizes the capacity of fellows to launch business that will help end system poverty. Participants engage in theological reflection and business development as they create enterprises that help their communities follow the way of Jesus and live into God's economy.



NEW AND RENEWING SPIRITUAL COMMUNITIES The New and Renewing



Spiritual Communities grant strengthens UCC Congregations by providing funds to assist in community revitalization or support new churches. Grants are awarded each year to fund ministries that impact their communities towards a Just World for All.

Please give prayerful consideration to supporting the **Strengthen the Church Offering**.

Happy Mother's Day!

I have mixed emotions about Mother's Day. To be honest I never liked it. In fact, as a mother, I often thought it was punishment. The church often had a breakfast to celebrate mothers which meant I had to get the children up earlier on a Sunday morning—more work for me. Now that my mother has died, it is a day of emotions and missing her more.

Mother's Day was about the only Sunday in the church of my youth that you heard about women. I never even thought of God as Mother, because I grew up in a church that depicted and spoke of God as male. That is all I ever knew until I attended seminary. Then on a cross-cultural trip to Ghana, West Africa, I learned that the Ghanaians have two names for God, one is masculine and one is feminine. That was eye-opening and I resonated with that. Unfortunately, the German missionaries told them that was wrong, they could only worship one God. What a loss.

As we look at history, why has the church not thought of God as much a Mother as a Father? We, the church, have lost so much because of that. Because of the belief that God is male, many women have been looked at as second-class citizens. Because of that belief, female pastors face so much more resistance than male clergy. Both have been called by God, so why does their gender make a difference in pastoring a church?

Matthew 23:37 states "How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings..." This scripture certainly depicts God as feminine, a mother hen gathering her chicks.

Can you see God as a mother that gathers her children in order to protect them just as you think of God as Shepherd? Can you worship a God that is a mother that loves and nurtures her children just as you worship a God as King of Kings? Can you worship God as mother and father?

I am very aware that not everyone has/had a mother that they choose to celebrate. However, I also know that at some time in your life, there was a woman that supported you, nurtured you, and encouraged you to become the person you are today.

On this Mother's Day, I pray that you can begin to think of God so much larger and more than we as humans can even imagine. God is not something that we can make in our own image. God is indeed male and female and even more.

-Rev. Sharon S. Morris, Associate Conference Minister