



November 24, 2019

What Does it Mean for a Church to be “5 for 5” ?

What is a “5 for 5” church? It is when a church contributes to OCWM and to all 4 of the Special Mission Offerings of the UCC. Below is a recap of the 5 for 5 offerings:

OCWM—Our Churches’ Wider Mission

This offering is taken year-round and supports not only the Conference’s work but also National’s work. Donations support many of the activities of the conference, from support for our Pastors, Members in Discernment, Retirees and churches to training, retreats, yearly meetings, materials and grants. These are just a few of the many services covered with OCWM contributions.

One Great Hour of Sharing

Supports partners in countries with ministries that fund health, education and agricultural development, emergency relief, refugee ministries and both international and domestic disaster response.

This offering is received on the Fourth Sunday of Lent.

Strengthen the Church

Supports church growth, pastoral and lay leadership development, youth and young adult ministries within conferences.

This offering is received on Pentecost Sunday.

Neighbors in Need

One-third of this offering supports the Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM) and two-thirds is administered by Justice and Witness Ministries to support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects through grants. *This offering is received on First Sunday of October as part of World Communion Sunday.*

The Christmas Fund

Provides direct financial assistance to retired and active United Church of Christ authorized ministers and lay employees and their surviving spouses, including pension and health premium supplementation, emergency assistance, and Christmas thank-you checks. A ministry of the Pension Boards, the offering is received annually on the Sunday before Christmas.

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5 for 5 churches are recognized at our Annual Meeting each year.

Give Us This Day, Our Daily Bread

As Americans, we may not realize how important bread is to other cultures. We can walk into any grocery on any given day and find a large assortment of different kinds of breads. But in other cultures, when there is no bread, there is no life. A loaf of bread for the majority of our world’s populations is literally the staff of life.

Bread is essential for life in the world in which we live. From a literal standpoint, bread is a life giving and life sustaining source of food and nourishment. However, when Jesus claims to be the bread of life, he is not referring to the nutritional value of bread. Jesus is talking about the spiritual demission of bread.

When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, part of the prayer that we know so well reminds us to ask for our daily bread. When Jesus gathers in the Upper Room with his Disciples, he uses a loaf of bread to symbolize the suffering that lies before him. And following his resurrection from the tomb, two of his Disciples recognize the risen Savior in the breaking of the bread around the table.

When we consider our hungry souls, there are a multitude of places where we can go to try and appease the hunger that burns within each and every one of us. There is the appeal of a secular world that promises us that if we look a certain way and wear the right clothing or drive the right kind of car we will be well fed. But as we all know these are only empty promises.

We live in a world that promises us that if we have enough money then we will be happy, and our lives will have meaning and purpose and value. But the countless millionaires who die lonely and depressed lives almost daily in our culture are testimonies to the fallacies of such promises.

I am the bread of life, Jesus says. He who comes to me will never go hungry and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. Jesus puts it all into perspective, doesn’t he? To be truly fulfilled in our lives we must be firmly rooted in our relationship and belief in Jesus Christ. All the other things are empty calories that provide not one ounce of nourishment for our souls. The secular promises that we place so much of our faith in are nothing more than giant Twinkies that make our souls sick when we gorge ourselves on them.

As we gather around tables to be with family on this Thanksgiving, may we be reminded of Jesus’ words, “I am the bread of life.” And as we fill our stomachs with delicious food, may we know that Jesus calls us to feast on His words. For when we feast on the words of Jesus, we will not be hungry, but you will be filled with the goodness of God that is available to all who come to know Jesus.

Have a Blessed Thanksgiving!

- Rev. Sharon S. Morris, PSEC Associate Conference

