

2024 CHRISTIAN HOME MONTH

PLANNING RESOURCES FOR CONGREGATIONS & CONFERENCES



Families: Many Forms, Common Faith! Called to Hope

The Christian Home Month resource is for family ministry leaders, ministry teams, volunteers in ministry, 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 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.

CHRISTIAN HOME MONTH QUADRENNIAL THEMES 2021-2024

2021: Families Called to Love

2022: Families Called to Peace

2023: Families Called to Justice

2024: Families Called to Hope

Our theme for 2024 is **Families Called to Hope**. This is an appropriate theme for the current context of our daily lives. Television news and social media inundate us with images and stories of tragedies seemingly at every level. This election year also includes the uneasiness of today's political climate, inequality, and protests. The church is not exempt from what is happening in the society around us. Sin, violence, and corruption surround us and take 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 hope, 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 hopeless. They are experiencing drug or alcohol problems, abuse, chronic illness, or the death of a family member. Families may be separated because of military service, incarceration, home quarantine, or financial circumstances. Some families are worn out from balancing work, church, and home responsibilities during these trying times. How can the body of Christ be a beacon of hope to all who despair? How can we help cultivate a culture 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, marriage, finance management, and English as a second language.
- Offering spaces of belonging to children, youth, and adults.
- Offering intergenerational worship for ALL God's children to include those with disabilities.

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.



CALLED TO HOPE: WORSHIP SERVICE RESOURCES

Here are some suggestions that may be useful in celebrating Christian Home Month or Family Life Sunday as part of a worship service. For additional resources, see *The United Methodist Book of Worship*.

ABBREVIATIONS

W&S = Worship and Song
TFWS = The Faith We Sing
UMH = United Methodist Hymnal

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.

HYMN SUGGESTIONS

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| • 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 TFWS |
| • The Family Prayer Song | 2188 TFWS |
| • Song of Hope | 2186 TFWS |
| • Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone) | 3104 W&S |
| • Lord of All Hopefulness | 2197 TFWS |
| • In Christ Alone | 3105 W&S; YouTube |
| • "Cornerstone" by Hillsong | YouTube |

SCRIPTURE READINGS

- 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

A Song of Preparation for the Prayer:

Sing this before the prayer for families and again after the litany to envelop all of it.

"Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying" – 2193, TFWS

Gracious God, who created the families of the earth, we commend to your care all 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.

Close by singing "Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying."

CALLED TO HOPE: FAMILY DEVOTIONAL TIMES

PAY ATTENTION (How does your family experience God?)

Symbol to Look For

The fish is one of the most important symbols of hope for Christians. The unblinking eyes of the fish represent God watching over the people of Earth. Jesus was often referred to as the “Big Fish” watching over all the little fish. Early Christians would draw the ICTHUS fish in the sand to demonstrate that they were Christ-followers. ICTHUS means Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior. As a constant reminder, anytime you see a fish or the ICTHUS symbol say: “God, thank you for giving us hope. Help us share your hope and love with others.”

Virtue to Practice: *Hope*

I Wonder...

- What has given you hope during these days, especially as we continue to find a new normal after the world’s pandemic?
- How will you share hope with others?
 - Offer ideas/conversation around those examples of sharing hope with others.

God Experiences:

- **Journal:** When you feel hopeful, write it down; or take a photo or draw a picture of your experience.
- **Chalk:** Show others when you experience hope by drawing a picture or writing words on your driveway (or sidewalk) to share with anyone who passes by your home. Draw the ICTHUS fish on your driveway. Find an adult to drive you to other church members’ residences and draw the fish on their sidewalk or driveways.

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 from this scripture passage?

Recommended Books:

Little Mole Finds Hope by Glenys Nellist

When Little Mole is feeling sad in his dark, underground home, his mother shows him how to look for hope. He finds that signs of spring are everywhere, from the daffodil bulbs under the soil to the tiny buds on the branches above. Hope *can* be found—even in the darkest places. A free downloadable activity guide is available from the author’s website: https://ms.beamingbooks.com/downloads/ActivityPack_LittleMoleFindsHope.pdf.

Circles of Hope by Karen Lynn Williams

In this story of determination, faith, and love, author Karen Williams introduces readers to the realities of rural life in the mountains of Haiti. Williams frames the tale of a Haitian boy’s struggle to keep a tree alive against the larger story of his country’s struggle against poverty. This uplifting tale suggests that one child can make a difference—a powerful message of hope for readers. A downloadable teacher’s guide for this book is offered here: http://karenlynnwilliams.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/circles_guide.pdf.

Take a deeper dive and begin the four-week study, *Being Hope: A Four-Week Study for Children: United Methodists in Global Mission* by Sally Hoelscher (Abingdon Press, 2014). Continue with one session each Sunday of a month during the next calendar year.

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 during these difficult days. Help each member of this family follow you and bring hope to others in creative ways. Amen.

DO HOLY WORK TOGETHER

Love God

Remember your blessings, individually and as a family. Eat dinner together as a family. Did mealtimes and family traditions change after the pandemic? Mealtime can be a time for deep meaning and relationships. Continue to make dinnertime worth the effort; spend time together offering love, giving, and receiving. At the beginning of each meal, go around the table and ask family members to share when they felt hopeful that day. Encourage noticing those daily blessings and naming them before each meal.

When children have certain table manner rules during mealtimes, they know what is expected of them. Mealtimes also involve certain rituals to coincide with those rules. Be creative and find ways to maintain these rules. Washing your hands before you eat is still an important rule to follow. Find a creative way of reminding your family how to see the blessings in these rituals. One such way is to write a blessing on each sheet of a roll of paper towel. As members of the family wash their hands, they will be reminded of the blessing and hope as they tear off a piece of towel to dry their hands. Offer thanks to God for these experiences. Ask God to give hope and blessings to others.

To reinforce scripture reading as a family, add a Bible verse to each sheet on the paper towel roll. Then, as family members tear off the piece of towel, have them find that passage in the family Bible and read it aloud before each meal. Take turns reading scripture to allow everyone in the family an opportunity.

Many families pray before their meal. Ask family members to put their thumbs up as they sit down for the meal. The last person to

CALLED TO HOPE: FAMILY DEVOTIONAL TIMES

put his/her thumbs up is the one who prays. This creates a lively approach and reminds the entire family to pray together before each meal. This is a terrific way to begin a new mealtime tradition. Practice for meals at home and at restaurants.

Love One Another

Identify people in your community who need hope (perhaps you have seen them on the local news). Make them a handmade card, sign, or some other symbol of God's hope. Mail the card (the old-fashioned way). A family member could drive to a neighbor's home to display a homemade sign with words of hope. If you are unable to visit in person, then Facetime or Zoom-call (as a family) someone in your community who needs God's hope. As a family, think of other ways to "send" hope to those who most need it.

Bless One Another

Genesis 12:1-2, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

The Call of Abram

¹ Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. ² I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing.

New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) New Revised Standard Version Bible, Copyright © 1989 the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Abram was blessed by God, and he became a blessing. Empower your family to become a blessing. The blessing of God is a gift that transforms us. When we acknowledge that we are blessed, we can't help but bless others.

Using a small ChapStick®, create the shape of a cross on your family member's hand while saying these words:

God loves you.
Christ is with you.
The Holy Spirit moves through you.
As you share God's *hope* with the world.

Make an Acronym Using the Word "Hope"

Using each letter, list a word or a phrase that will help your family offer hope to the world. For example:

Holding
Onto
Promises
Eternal

Use this during your family's sharing time around the table. Find creative ways to see how many different acronyms you can come up with. Assign one letter to each member of the family and collectively come up with acronyms.

STUDY SCRIPTURE TOGETHER

Some of the key scripture passages that mention justice are Isaiah 40:31, Micah 7:7, Psalm 42:5, Psalm 31:24, Romans 15:13, 1 Corinthians 13:13, Hebrews 11:1, and 1 Peter 1:3. Ask one family member to read one of these passages or encourage them to find others. After family members have heard the scripture, ask them to state what the scripture made them think about finding hope and being hopeful. For a deeper way of hearing the scripture passages, consider Lectio Divina (see <https://www.upperroom.org/resources/lectio-divina-praying-the-scriptures>).

Finish the Sentence

Another way to create conversation is to play a simple game of "finishing the sentence." Complete one of these sentences (or create your own) to describe where you might find hope in your life:

- *Hope from God can be found when...*
- *A person I know who offers a glimpse of hope in this world is...*
- *Jesus offers hope through this story from the Bible...*
- *If I preached a sermon about hope, I would say...*
- *I offered hope to (name) when I...*
- *I feel hopeful with my family when we...*
- *Jeremiah 29:11 (NIRV) states, "I know the plans I have for you," announces the Lord. "I want you to enjoy success. I do not plan to harm you. I will give you hope for the years to come." When I think about this verse, I feel...*

Random Reminders of Hope

Post a scripture passage, line from a hymn or song, inspirational thought, or brief prayer in random places around the house. Have each family member take a turn and select a different passage each week. Place the reminder somewhere so that all in the family have the opportunity to "find" the reminder.

FAMILY PRAYER

Prayer for Christian Home Month Families

Gracious God, who created the families of the earth, we commend to your care all 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.

CALLED TO HOPE: RETREAT MODEL

Planning for the Retreat

1. The congregation prays for the retreat, the participating families, and the coordinating team.
2. A retreat planning team is created that is made up of six to eight people from the congregation. This team should be equally knowledgeable in online technology (just in case you need to shift the retreat to that format) and in-person leadership.
3. The retreat team meets and plans the retreat:
 - Chooses a weekend to offer the retreat. If the location is not the church, the venue should be secured. Locate the closest United Methodist camping and retreat center and inquire about their facilities. Check out umcrm.camp.
 - Decides on the retreat schedule, including times for prayer and worship.
 - Prepares a budget.
 - Designs a flyer that includes a registration form and information about fees, dates, and location.
 - Recruits leaders. Provides Safer Sanctuary training for all leaders involved with the event.
 - Plans all food menus and suggestions, while adhering to guidelines about food allergies.
 - Creates an offering opportunity for an organization in the community that helps families in need.
 - Promotes the retreat using social media, including the church website and Facebook page.
4. 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. Registration for the location may be needed and completed for those families attending the retreat.
5. The team encourages families to collect the following supplies: Hymnals or online access; Bibles; children's books on hope; board games; sports equipment, one posterboard per family; magazines; scissors; glue, modeling clay or Play-Doh, Legos®, paper, and markers 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-supper). Have dinner together at the retreat location. Use the above-mentioned ideas around handwashing and prayer before the meal. Incorporate the paper towel roll with scripture verses into each meal during the retreat.

7:15–7:30 P.M. — Gathering time after dinner. Share announcements and opening prayer. Sing familiar camp songs, favorite hymns, and praise choruses. Teach the group “Through It All” (*The United Methodist Hymnal*, 507).

7:30–8:30 P.M. — Divide participants into “family” groups of four to six people (mixing up actual family members with others in the congregation. This will encourage an intergenerational approach). 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. Ask each family to then decide on the three most essential features that must be present in a community for it to be a hopeful place to live. Ask each family to talk about its community, including what family members decided were the essentials for hopeful living. Discuss as the larger group the top three most essential features. Are there similarities from each group's list?

8:30–9:00 P.M. — Have one person read the book *Circle of Hope* by Karen Lynn Williams. Using the guide, discuss the following questions within your family group.

Wonder together, asking:

- I wonder, “How did you experience God in the story?”
- I wonder, “How do you celebrate birthdays in your family? What other traditions does your family have?”
- “What does hope mean?”
- I wonder, “What gives you hope? How does planting a tree show that Facile is hopeful? How can you work toward the things you hope for?”

Encourage participants to locate a scripture passage that mentions “hope” and make it their verse throughout the retreat. Inform participants that these verses will play a part in retreat worship.

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

9:00–10:00 P.M. — Individual devotion activity: Think about a time that you had a problem. Journal giving an example of how you solved the problem. Share snacks and responses with your small-group family during this time. If your retreat location allows, have a firepit fire or take a flashlight walk on the grounds.

Saturday

8:00–9:00 A.M. — Breakfast

9:00–9:30 A.M. — Morning Worship. Lead the group in singing, scripture, and prayer. Begin a responsive prayer by inviting each participant to recite a verse regarding “hope” that was selected the night before. Encourage participants to memorize those verses. Each time a participant recites a verse, the group will respond with “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105). This encourages everyone to reflect/meditate on each verse recited.

9:30–10:30 A.M. — Ask the participants to reassemble in the same “family groups” as the previous night. Have families read John 14:15-21. Invite each family to imagine ways of living that reflect Jesus’ commandments. Ask each family team to make up a skit showing how people could live, sharing Christ’s light, love, and hope with others. Advise each family to talk through what members will do and what they see as hopeful in the scripture and their situation before moving into creating the skit.

10:30–10:45 A.M. — Break

10:45–NOON — Ask the families to present their skits. After each skit, ask the entire group to name what was hopeful in each situation.

NOON–1:00 P.M. — Lunch

1:00–2:30 P.M. — Distribute hymnals or songbooks to each group. Give them fifteen minutes to locate a hymn or song that talks about “hope.” Ask them to rehearse the song so that they can teach it to the total group. (Find someone from each group who can help with “reading” music.). Call the groups together and invite the family groups to teach their song to everyone.

2:30–5:30 P.M. — Play “I Spy on Campgrounds.”

Take a walk on the grounds of the retreat location with your “family.” If the location is your church, pay particular attention to the area nearby. Point out things you notice for the first time. Spice it up with a game of “I Spy.” While groups are walking, have them look for items from the list below. Take photos with a smartphone camera to share with the retreat families later in the evening.

I Spy Checklist:

- ☐ Something flying in the sky
- ☐ A nut
- ☐ An insect with wings
- ☐ Something blue
- ☐ A clover
- ☐ Something that crawls
- ☐ A smooth stone
- ☐ Something yellow
- ☐ Another person with the same brand of shoes as you
- ☐ Something with a wheel
- ☐ A bird

- ☐ A telephone line/pole
- ☐ Something white
- ☐ A critter with four legs
- ☐ Flowers blooming
- ☐ A sign other than a stop sign
- ☐ Someone riding a bike
- ☐ Something that gives you “hope.”

Alternative Activity:

Afternoon Fun. Encourage naps, renewal time, or nature time. Provide walking/hiking trail maps, recreational/sports equipment, and arts and crafts materials. Provide suggestions for outdoor activities such as corn hole, volleyball, croquet, or sidewalk chalk art.

5:30–6:30 P.M. — Dinner

6:30–7:30 P.M. — Ask the participants to reassemble into their family groups. Read John 14:15-21 and Revelation 22:1-6. Ask each family to use 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 are 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. Encourage family groups to be creative in the artwork and to discuss and share what this looks and feels like.

7:30–8:15 P.M. — Gather the full group together and allow each family to share their vision 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. Ask for volunteers to name a song, a scripture verse, or something they have seen this day (share the photos from the “I Spy” activity earlier in the afternoon) that helped them understand “hope.”

Lead the group in sharing and praying about their joys and concerns. Recite again, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105) with scripture verse recall. Ask those who wish to name a song, a second scripture verse, or something they have seen this day that brought them hope.

9:00–10:00 P.M. — Individual devotion activity: Think about a time that you had a problem. Journal, giving an example of how you solved the problem. Snack and game time. If the weather permits, go outside for stargazing or s’mores around a firepit.

Sunday

8:00–9:00 A.M. — Breakfast together as a family before worship

9:00–10:00 A.M. — Closing Worship

The retreat leadership team can lead a planned worship service or use experiences from the weekend for a time of music, prayer, and praise.

10:00–11:00 A.M. — Clean up and journey home.

CONGREGATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR CHRISTIAN HOME MONTH

- Share the “Called to Hope: Family Devotional Times” material with your church, inviting families to try the suggested activities at home later in the year. Have a reunion of the retreat participants later in the year.
- 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, on your website, or during worship services. Be consistent in promotion throughout the year.
- Enjoy a meal together at church. Place a question card on the table and invite people 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. Use this event to promote next year’s Christian Home Month participation.
- 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 and spotlighting a family of the month.
- Begin a four-week study each Sunday (or one night a week) for a month, using the resource *Being Hope: A Four-Week Study for Children: United Methodists in Global Mission* by Sally Hoelscher (Abingdon Press, 2014).

FAMILY COVENANT FOR HOPEFUL LIVING

Create a covenant together as you promise to grow and share God’s hope. At the end of every month, take time to ask: “*How have we lived into our covenant this past month?*” Celebrate how you shared God’s hope with one another, then make any changes that might be needed for the next month. Continue this covenant throughout the remaining months of the year.

This covenant will be in effect from _____ (start date) to _____ (end 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 in creative ways.
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

2024

MAY: Conduct plans made for celebrating the Christian home. Recognize women in the congregation who are mothers in families and mothers in faith. On May 19, Pentecost, have a “wear red” day and recognize those in the congregation who model the presence of God. Be creative and use online and social media platforms to create virtual ways of recognition.

JUNE: Recognize men in the congregation who are fathers in families and fathers in faith. Publish either an online devotional guide or a print version for families to use on vacation or at home throughout the summer months. Include scripture, meditations, and prayers. Allow church members to contribute by sharing stories and God-sightings from their faith journeys. Have one of the children create artwork for the cover of the devotional guide.

JULY: Plan a service project that allows families to help a school in the neighborhood near the church. Ask church members to bring school supplies that can be donated to that school, and others, for families who cannot afford to buy supplies for their children. Fill backpacks with the supplies and have the school administrators hand them out to the children who need them.

AUGUST: Have an “end of summer” ice cream social. Have a “Blessing of the Backpacks” that were filled last month as part of one worship service before school begins. Recruit a leader and set up a parent book study using the book, *Wondering: About the Bible with Children* by Elizabeth F. Caldwell (available from Cokesbury and Amazon). Reinforce this study group by registering for the Discipleship Ministries teachable course with the same book during the fall months.

SEPTEMBER: Hold a parenting class on *It Takes a Church to Raise a Parent* by Rachel Turner (available on Amazon) to help parents and grandparents reflect on their spiritual lives and how the church can help equip and empower them on their parenting journey.

OCTOBER: Celebrate the Children’s Sabbath (for more information see <https://www.childrensdefense.org>). Sponsor a “trunk or treat” in your community. Invite church members to decorate their cars, park in the church parking lot, and distribute treats. Offer a free hot dog/chili dinner beforehand. Host a chili cookoff to find out who can make the best tasting chili. Have an intergenerational-aged panel of judges.

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. Participate in the daily family devotional offered at <https://pictureadvent.weebly.com>. Provide a list of places needing volunteers that would welcome families volunteering together to help those without food and shelter during the holiday.

DECEMBER: Offer an intergenerational Advent workshop for the entire church family. Invite individuals to bring to church one Advent/Christmas decoration they use in their home and talk about why it is meaningful to them (during children’s moments in worship). Provide a devotional guide for lighting the Advent wreath and praying together at home. Invite families to create Chrismons for the Hanging of the Greens service or at home. Reinforce the meaning of the Chrismons by creating an informational/study guide to help educate the families: <https://www.umc.org/en/content/ask-the-umc-what-are-chrismons>.

2025

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; storytelling about family ancestors; having a stargazing night; or picking a favorite Bible story and acting it out.

FEBRUARY: Have a daddy-daughter dance the Friday before Valentine’s Day for the entire community. Celebrate

marriage ministries on the Sunday nearest Valentine’s Day. Recognize anniversaries, engagements, and milestones in the lives of couples in the congregation.

MARCH: Encourage families to have pancakes the Tuesday before Ash Wednesday (March 5), remembering that with Ash Wednesday, we begin Lent and a time of study and self-denial. Begin plans for celebrating Christian Home Month in May. Host a mother-son coffee/tea get-together for the community. Plan a family spring break retreat at one of the United Methodist church camps and retreat centers. For more information and a list of locations, visit the UMC CRM website, <http://umcrm.camp>. Begin a four-week study, to coincide with Lent, for children and their parents, *Being Hope: A Four-Week Study for Children: United Methodists in Global Mission* by Sally Hoelscher (Abingdon Press, 2014).

APRIL: Easter is April 20. Promote Discipleship Ministries’ Holy Week House Party resource for families to use during Holy Week. This resource includes family prayers, meditations, activities, and conversations that help focus on Jesus’ resurrection. Welcome spring. Hold a family workday 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 from the nursery, removing those that are broken or no longer useable. Observe Earth Day on April 22. Join with others in your community to demonstrate God’s love with creation care. Creation care is an essential part of discipleship. Raise your family’s awareness of our responsibility to care for God’s creation. Use the book, *Climate Hero Handbook: How Kids Can Defend, Protect, and Restore the Planet* by Jessica Gamache and Jennifer Manley Rogers to learn more about creation care. Being good stewards of God’s creation is an excellent way to offer hope.

Begin preparation for observing Christian Home Month 2025: Families Called to Love.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES: RECOMMENDED READING

CHILDREN'S BOOKS

- *Being Hope: A Four-Week Study for Children: United Methodists in Global Mission* by Sally Hoelscher (Abingdon Press, 2014).
- *The Bubble Who Would Not Pop!* by Shelly (Author), Simone Krüger (Illustrator) (Little Lambs Books, 2017).
- *Circles of Hope (Stories from Latin America)* by Karen Lynn Williams (Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, 2005).
- *Climate Hero Handbook: How Kids Can Defend, Protect, and Restore the Planet* by Jessica Gamache and Jennifer Manley Rogers (General Board of Higher Education & Ministry, 2022).
- *Hope Is a Rainbow* by Hoda Kotb (Author), Chloe Dominique (Illustrator) (Flamingo Books, 2024).
- *I Am Every Good Thing* by Derrick Barnes (Author), Gordon C. James (Illustrator) (Nancy Paulsen Books, 2020).
- *A Kids Book About Hope* by Kali Thorne Ladd (Kids Books About, 2023).
- *Little Mole Finds Hope* by Glenys Nellist (Author), Sally Anne Garland (Illustrator) (Beaming Books, 2020).
- *Love Looks Like This* by Sherri Lynn Shumate (CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016).
- *REAL Superheroes to the Rescue: Children Can Change the World* by Sherri Lynn Shumate (Squeaking Pips Press, Inc., 2016).
- *What Is Hope?* by Stephanie V.W. Lucianovic (Author), Kelsey Buzzell (Illustrator) (Nancy Paulsen Books, 2023).

YOUTH BOOKS

- *Everyday Disciples: Covenant Discipleship with Youth* by Chris Wilterdink (Discipleship Resources, 2016).

ADULT BOOKS

- *Children and Family Ministry Handbook* by Sarah Flannery (Abingdon Press, 2020).
- *Children's Ministry and the Spiritual Child: Practical, Formation-Focused Ministry* by Robin Turner and Trevecca Okholm, editors (Abilene Christian University Press, 2023).
- *Disciples Making Disciples: A Guide for Covenant Discipleship Groups and Class Leaders* by Steven W. Manskar (Discipleship Resources, 2016).
- *Growing With: Every Parent's Guide to Helping Teenagers and Young Adults Thrive in Their Faith, Family, and Future* by Kara Powell (Baker Books, 2019).
- *Hope for the Future: Answering God's Call to Justice for Our Children* by Shannon Daley-Harris (Westminster John Knox Press, 2016).
- *It Takes a Church to Raise a Parent: Creating a Culture Where Parenting for Faith can Flourish* by Rachel Turner (Bible Reading Fellowship, 2018).
- *Sticky Faith: Everyday Ideas to Build Lasting Faith in Your Kids* by Kara Powell and Chap Clark (Zondervan, 2011).
- *Wondering: About the Bible with Children* by Elizabeth F. Caldwell (Abingdon Press, 2020).

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. Additional resources, ideas, and suggestions for Christian Home Month 2024 and family faith formation can be found online at:

<http://www.UMCdiscipleship.org/leadership-resources/intergenerational-family-ministries>

Website: [UMCdiscipleship.org](http://www.UMCdiscipleship.org) | Toll Free: (877) 899-2780 | Email: info@UMCdiscipleship.org