

Menstrual Justice in Action

Period Packs



Why do women and girls deserve dignity for periods?

For so many reasons!

1

According to UNICEF, girls in low-income nations lack access to water at school, appropriate sanitation, and menstrual products that are critical to enabling girls and their female teachers to attend school.

2

Providing quality menstrual pads to people who need them is proven to improve overall physical and mental health.

3

Social taboos and stigmatization about menstruation are linked to lowered educational achievement, poor health, and economic disempowerment of women and girls.

Period Poverty is a health issue that women face daily. From the high cost of menstruation products to an inability to access products because of disaster, lack of transportation, or a supply desert, menstruation happens and menstrual health and hygiene is a human right. UCC's Women's and Gender Justice Ministry participates in the [Church of World Service period packs initiative](#). Our ministry supports congregations seeking to start Period Pack initiatives through a resource toolkit, education, and teach-in advocacy.

Thank You

for considering a period pack project in your congregation or community! The United Church of Christ partners with Church World Service to address menstrual health and hygiene of people who are in transitional living situations, such as refugees and people affected by natural disasters. I am proud of our community for addressing a biological need without shame or stigma. Period health is a human right.



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The Church World Service (CWS) period pack initiative is a relatively new creation in meeting the needs of people experiencing transition. In 2023, nearly 6000 assembled kits were donated and distributed throughout the United States to shelters, refugee centers, and other sites of transitional housing. More than half of those were produced by the social action project at UCC's General Synod 34 in Indianapolis.

Well done, UCC! Way to Love your Neighbors!!

“With the cost of menstrual products [averaging \\$13.25 a month](#), amounting to over \$6,000 per lifetime [2019 numbers], those impacted by period poverty have to make insufferable decisions every day, such as choosing between buying sanitary pads or food, and buying tampons or required school supplies. In addition to the taxing costs, [these products are not covered](#) by any government assistance programs, such as SNAP. As a result, many people are forced to use products longer than recommended or improvise with unsanitary alternatives, such as old clothes and rags. Apart from the mental, physical, and financial burdens, period poverty also affects one’s ability to attend work, school, and other events every month.” [See source](#)

Period Poverty disproportionately affects adolescent students. “A study commissioned by [Thinx and PERIOD](#) in 2021 found that 23% of students in the U.S. have struggled to afford menstrual products, 51% have worn menstrual products for longer than recommended, and 38% often or sometimes cannot do their best schoolwork due to lack of access to such supplies. These students are often forced to choose between necessities, with 16% saying that during the pandemic, they have chosen to buy menstrual products over food or clothing.” [See source](#)

Who else can benefit from period packs?

- Disaster Relief victims - feminine hygiene products are often not readily available after a disaster. And to our knowledge, nothing like this has formally been a part of disaster relief efforts. The Red Cross does not distribute feminine products, so one of our partners in the Red Cross is very excited about our new initiative and the impact it can have during a disaster response.
- Refugees and Asylum Seekers - people who are seeking safety in our country and often arrive with only the clothes on their backs.
- People experiencing homelessness. CWS provides kits to shelters all across the USA.

Prophetic Call | Why Period Packs

The United Church of Christ has an opportunity to live our values - values that define human sexuality as a God-given gift. Menstruation is a natural process of the body directly related to the human capacity to enhance wholeness and fulfillment, to express love, commitment, delight, and pleasure, to bring new life into the world, and to give glory to God. We have an opportunity to say “No” to stigma and shame, provide dignity and health to people in need, and proclaim that all bodies bleed and all bodies deserve tenderness and care during menstruation.

What could be more Christian than to meet the human need to feel love and live with dignity? Let this prayer be our guide:

God of creation, God of the miracle of human existence, we ask that you guide our work in serving people whose lives have been overturned by the forces of nature, the forces of economy, the forces of war and dominance, the forces of chaos that seep into this beautiful world you created. Lead us, Oh God, as we seek to provide some tenderness to those who have seen harshness, meaningful living to people who feel lost, and respect to all who are inherently worthy of your love, as well as ours. We speak this prayer into the names of your holy children, the ancestors, and Jesus. Amen.



Imagine if toilet paper was not provided in school - a place you spend eight hours a day, five days a week, ten months a year, for about twelve years as a child. How would that impact your mental health and physical wellbeing? Your school attendance? Your ability to do well in school and go on to attend further schooling? While BYO toilet paper may never be something we have to worry about, lacking access to menstrual products is a harsh reality for millions of individuals who menstruate.” [See source](#)

Providing Period Packs to help end period poverty is a straightforward way you can help share your love with others. It's a chance to be an even greater blessing to individuals who lack access to necessary menstrual supplies like sanitary napkins, tampons, and soap. Whether you are making Period Packs as an individual or hosting a Period Pack party with your friends, by making these simple kits you will be offering people who menstruate a sense of dignity during the menstrual cycle.

You can start a Period Pack Project any day of the year and host as many packing parties as your community desires! We invite you to consider participating in Period Pack Sunday which occurs near Menstrual Hygiene Day at the end of May!

“*you can start a PP project any day.*”



How to plan **Period Pack Project**

- Start by reading through this toolkit and the Church World Service hygiene kit website at [Period Packs \(Menstrual Hygiene Kit\) - CWS Kits](#) The Period Pack Educational Presentation would be great to share with your congregation!
- Create a timeline in which you can focus on menstrual health for at least a month, two is better. Decide if you want to order the [materials from the supplier contracted with Church World Service](#), in which case you are most likely going to be fundraising, or whether you are going to ask people to bring the [specific items](#) needed for the period packs.
- Consider challenging another congregation in your conference or association to see who can make more kits (compare how many in a per capita way so that it is an equitable comparison) and treat the winner to a potluck meal to celebrate everyone's success and build community.
- Plan a kickoff event during which you can educate about menstrual health by sharing resources in this toolkit.
- Choose a goal for how many kits you will create. Keep everyone informed about how much more is needed for you to reach your goals.
- Apply for the UCC [Global H.O.P.E. matching grant at Global H.O.P.E. Kit Matching Grant Application \(smarterselect.com\)](#)
- Set up an information and/or donation table during your fellowship time to continue creating awareness and remind people of the goals.
- Let your local media outlets know what you are planning.
- **HAVE A FABULOUS GATHERING** at which you can create hygiene kits and pack them up to take to a depot or send to Church World Service. Don't forget to count how many kits you made and share with your community. Take pictures of your event and share with your conference, association, and the national UCC office so your successful project can be shared! Celebrate!!
- Thank everyone who attended and clean up.
- Lastly, within two weeks reach out to thank everyone who supported your event, for destigmatizing menstruation and for providing for people who need to know that their most basic needs are not ignored when challenges present themselves.

Assembly Tips

- All items must be new.
- Do not enclose personal notes, money, or extra items in the kits. Stick to the list exactly.
- Have “stations” where designated people are handing the correct number of items to people who pass by each station with the bag to assemble within. This helps make sure the correct number of each item is placed into each kit-bag. People gathering the items from unstaffed stations can easily lead to distracted participants who are having fun and lose track of the task, thus creating more audits of returned kits and incomplete kits.
- Place all items in the plastic bag, remove air, and seal. Air trapped in bags makes them difficult to pack.
- The video labeled Period Pack (Menstrual Hygiene Kit) at [Resources - CWS Kits](#) indicates the order of stations to make assembly easier.
- [CWS tip sheet](#) is also helpful for having a special event.

Church World Service has contracted with a company that will ship supplies to make kits altogether and the boxes can be reused to return the assembled kits. The cost is \$180 for materials for 12 kits, which comes to \$15 per kit. Shipping both directions is included.



While less fun for some than tracking down and purchasing all the items oneself, the [CWS Kits Party Packs](#) assure that your congregation has the right number and correct type of each item, reduce waste by reusing shipping boxes, and save a great deal of time and energy that would be spent pricing and shopping for the items on your own. Attempting to find a more affordable option took a great deal of time and effort, and ended with a more expensive kit and mismatched number of items that resulted in leftovers. I highly recommend the Party Pack ([Party Packs - CWS Kits](#)) method. Congregants can engage in fundraising to purchase the packs and the community can gather to assemble them.”

Dr. Sherry Warren, UCC Minister for Women’s and Gender Justice

Resources

- Menstrual Hygiene Day <https://menstrualhygieneday.org/> has resources and ideas about how to reduce the stigma associated with menstruation and bring this natural function into the public sphere.
- World Health Organization asks us to focus on menstrual health and rights: <https://www.who.int/news/item/22-06-2022-who-statement-on-menstrual-health-and-rights>
- UCC General Synod34 article: <https://cwsglobal.org/blog/general-synod-participants-assemble-thousands-of-hygiene-kits-to-combat-period-poverty/>
- Encounters at the Well <https://www.ucc.org/red-tents-and-red-flags/>
- How CWS kits address immediate needs in times of disaster: [Bridging the Gap in Disaster Response | CWS \(cwsglobal.org\)](#)
- Period.com shares wonderful resources to educate ([Period.org | Home](#)) and takes an expansive intersectional approach about who experiences menstruation. Remember, not all women and girls menstruate and not everyone who menstruates identifies as a woman or a girl.

Videos

- CWS Period Packs | End Period Poverty (with captions) (youtube.com) - 2:14 <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UaYpmnu8zHQ>
- CWS Period pack full length video, UCC Branded, no captions - 2:14 <https://vimeo.com/911592847/703046e3dd?share=copy> <https://vimeo.com/911592847/703046e3dd?share=copy>
- CWS short UCC branded video for social media sharing, with captions - :30 <https://vimeo.com/911593148/0856625253?share=copy>

Please review all resources you will share with your congregation for appropriateness. Balancing education with cultural appropriateness and developmental understanding can be challenging. If you have a coordinator or team for Sunday school or [Our Whole Lives](#), check with them and your clergy to determine what is best for your community. Please keep in mind we are working towards normalizing a biological function and destigmatizing this health issue.

Glossary

Menarche: this is when a person with female reproductive parts starts having a period, also known as their menstrual cycle.

Menstrual health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, in relation to the menstrual cycle.

Menstrual Health and Hygiene encompasses both menstrual hygiene management (MHM) and the broader systemic factors that link menstruation with health, well-being, gender equality, education, equity, empowerment, and rights. These systematic factors have been summarized by UNESCO as accurate and timely knowledge, available, safe, and affordable materials, informed and comfortable professionals, referral and access to health services, sanitation and washing facilities, positive social norms, safe and hygienic disposal and advocacy and policy.

Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM) was defined by the Joint Monitoring Program for Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene as “Women and adolescent girls using a clean menstrual management material to absorb or collect blood that can be changed in privacy as often as necessary for the duration of the menstruation period, using soap and water for washing the body as required, and having access to facilities to dispose of used menstrual management materials. They understand the basic facts linked to the menstrual cycle and how to manage it with dignity and without discomfort or fear.”

Menopause: this is the time in a person’s life when they no longer have a menstrual cycle. Once a menstruator has not had a period for 12 consecutive months, they are considered to be in menopause. People who have had some or all of their female reproductive organs removed can also experience menopause due to that procedure.

Menstruators: not all people who menstruate identify as women and girls and that not all women and girls menstruate. However, most people who experience menstruation and its requirements and challenges identify as women and girls.

Peri- menopause: As a menstruator ages, hormonal changes bring an end to the menstrual cycle, and periods change. They might become less often, more often, heavier, or have other changes. This signals that menopause is coming.

Period: this is the process of menstruation. It lasts on average about 5 days and occurs about every 28 days. That is why Menstrual Hygiene Day is celebrated on May 28.

Period Poverty: not being able to afford or access menstrual hygiene supplies, which affect as many as 40% of menstruators in the US alone.

Thank you for working to end period poverty and bring dignity and menstrual health to people all around the globe!