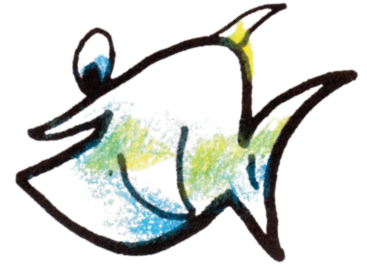


GREAT and WIDE

Strengthen the Church



Psalm 104 is a Psalm of juxtapositions. There are sea creatures small and great populating God's creation. One of those great creatures is the mighty Leviathan. This sea monster is not presented as a frightening creature. No, God has created the Leviathan to play in the sea! What are we to do with this depiction of a both joyful and unruly world teeming with life?

It is no surprise that this Psalm is used by many as a Pentecost reading. Pentecost can be celebration of the vastness of God's presence in the world. Our faith turns us toward a God who can hold many languages, many creatures, and many possibilities. The images of sea creatures playing reminds us that we each find a unique purpose and calling in God's creation. These purposes can be big and institutional or small and emerging.

Our call in the United Church of Christ to the Strengthen the Church offering is a response to the church which is Great and Wide. The offering does not support only one form of church but is spread across the playfulness of many churches. Whether the offering supports an outdoor worshipping community in Wisconsin or the National Ministries MESA team who builds systems to connect pastors and congregations, the movement of God is apparent.

Thank you for your generous support of this offering. My prayer is that your gift will bless the many ministries that connect us, from congregations to Conferences. If you have any questions about Strengthen the Church, I'd love to hear from you.

God's work in the world is indeed Great and Wide!

Many blessings,
Rev. Rachel McDonald, mcdonaldr@ucc.org
Generosity Officer, Our Church's Wider Mission and Special Mission Offerings

*Here is the sea,
great and wide,
which teems with
creatures
innumerable,
living things both
small and great.
Psalm 104*



WHAT YOU GET



HOW TO USE IT

Bulletin Inserts -> Use for multiple weeks leading up to the offering

Digital Media -> Share on social media or in email newsletters

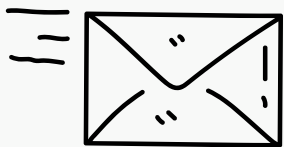
Offering Envelopes -> Collect and designate gifts

Video Library -> Share in worship or online

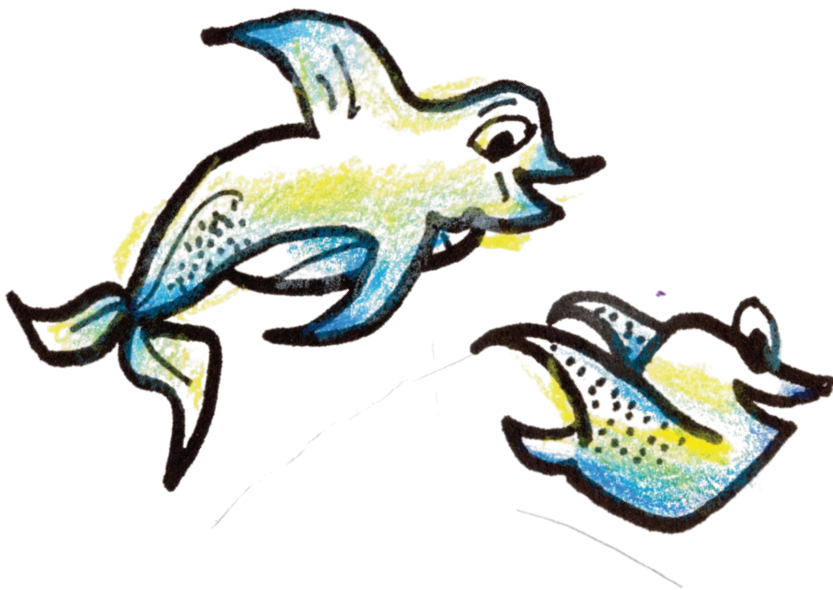
Paper Chain Activity -> Involve all ages in blessing the offering recipients

Offering Descriptions -> Copy and paste in bulletins, newsletters, and more

Poster -> Use as a coloring page or to advertise in your church building



Send your church's offering collection to your Conference or donate directly online at support.ucc.org/stc



Share pictures of your church's prayer paper chains by tagging the United Church of Christ on social media!

The Strengthen the Church Offering furthers the work of our conferences and the national UCC as we work together to strengthen and renew existing congregations, fund leadership development, and provide exciting new programs for youth and young adults. The offering is divided with 50% staying regionally within your conference and 50% supporting the National Ministries.



Ways to Promote the Offering

- 1 Set the Date: Many congregations collect the Strengthen the Church offering on Pentecost Sunday, which is June 8th in 2025. Your church may want to use a different Sunday and that's okay!
- 2 Plan Your Calendar: Take time to note when you might want to share about the offering in church communication, in worship, and when the gifts will be sent along.
- 3 Celebrate in Worship: Utilize the resources provided to share a sense of joy surrounding the offering. You can have a mission moment, but you can also offer a prayer, a children's message, or even include the offering as part of a sermon.
- 4 Express Gratitude: Be sure to name and thank the congregation for their offering. You're allowed to keep celebrating after the offering date!

Where do I get my envelopes?

Order offering envelopes at uccresources.com. Utilize the login feature and order the exact quantity needed. Other digital resources including videos and graphics can be found at www.ucc.org/stc.

As a designer and illustrator, I have had the great joy of working on many projects for the United Church of Christ. But the challenge of Psalm 104, the theme for the 2025 Strengthen the Church Appeal, made me particularly excited. How lucky to be asked to bring to life a vision of the sea, "Great and Wide," teeming with innumerable creatures, big and small, species galore, living and loving together. I invite you to jump in with me and play with my friends, the water's warm!

--Ted Dawson, illustrator of this year's promotional materials

**Holy One,
Thank you for the many ways we find
connection in being church together.
Whenever we feel alone, remind us of
how we are a part of your vast
creation. Let us find a sense of
playfulness and joy in knowing our
place in your world. May our joy turn
to abundance as we share with one
another resources that lead to the
flourishing of all people. Come, Holy
Spirit, and bless us we pray,
Amen.**

