



MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Following Your Passion
and Finding Your
Place to Serve

JAMES A. HARNISH

**Make a Difference
Community Group Conversation Guide
Lent 2018**

Welcome!

Thank you for hosting a community group for our Lenten study of Jim Harnish's book and video series *Make a Difference*.

Please take some time to explore this Conversation Guide and the resources at the Community Group Host page on our website at www.firstumc.org/g3hosts. The password for the page is **G3*2018**.

On the G3 Hosts webpage, you'll be able to access the videos for this study as well as a digital version of this Conversation Guide. To keep costs down for the materials, we have made arrangements with the United Methodist Publishing House to stream the videos from our website. You can access the videos from your smartphone, tablet, PC or web-enabled smart TV. From there, you can stream the videos to your TV via a streaming device like Roku, AppleTV, Fire Stick, etc. If you do not have access to a streaming player, a limited number of DVDs are available to be shared amongst groups. You may also elect to purchase your own copy of the DVD through the Adult Ministries Office or at Cokesbury.com. DVDs are \$32 plus shipping.

About This Guide

This conversation guide is designed to give you what you need to host a great conversation with your friends and neighbors. This document is based on the more in-depth *Make a Difference Leader Guide* published by Abingdon Press. Should you wish to have the more in-depth *Leader Guide*, copies are available for purchase through the Adult Ministries Office.

Each session plan is preceded by an executive summary of the chapter for that session. This can make a helpful review for you as a host and for your group members. It is intended to serve as a refresher on themes of the book chapter.

Each session includes a candle lighting ritual. The candle represents the light of Christ breaking in to our world, and our call to reflect Christ's light and make a difference in our world. This candle lighting is a time to honor someone who has made a difference in the lives of one of the group members. A different group member should be invited to light the candle each week, sharing briefly about the person they are honoring and the difference they have made in their life and the world.

Make a Difference is a practical study. Ultimately we want people to take what they learn and put it into practice to make a difference in the world. To that end, there is a Take Action section at the end of each session based on the Action Ideas listed at the conclusion of each chapter. Be sure to allow ample time in your meeting to fully engage the Take Action section. It's during these times that group members will commit to action steps for the coming week. At the beginning of each session, there is a Check-In time to report on experiences with the action items from the previous week. This provides some accountability for living out the commitments made for the week.

Thank you again for hosting a community group. We're here to support you in this vital ministry, so if you have questions or concerns, please reach out to us at GroupLife@firstumc.org or call the church office at **863-686-3163**.

Blessings to you on this Lenten journey!

Warren Pattison
Adult Ministries Director

Summary of Chapter 1: Awakening

Our primary calling is to be faithful disciples, making a transformative difference in the world. Jesus' initial call is to "Come, follow me" (Matt 4:19). The apostle Paul wrote that we were saved for good works, that we are God's masterpiece, created specifically to be his instrument for bringing transformation, reconciliation and restoration into a broken world (Eph 2:10).

The Spirit of God awakens each of us to this life-transforming call. Awakening to God's class is not a one-time experience but an ongoing process by which the Spirit of God continues to open our eyes to new ways of serving.

God is calling, and we have to listen for how God is calling us to serve. In the book of Samuel, we see the example of a young child listening and responding to God's invitation and call (1 Sam. 3:1-11). Are we likewise attentive to God's call in our lives?

Samuel remained awake in the night, but it is frightfully easy to fall asleep and miss out on the way God wants to use our lives. This happens when we are not fully awake to the voice of God's Spirit. We also can drift away into spiritual complacency completely. Or, we may become entangled in the worries and concerns of the world around us. It is tempting to follow other voices when we are constantly bombarded by how the world defines mission and priorities. How do we remain awake and vigilant to God's direction and voice?

In Second Timothy, Paul encourages us to rekindle our faith much like stirring up the embers of an old fire. Remember, he tells Timothy, the origins of your faith and who you are (II Tim. 1:5-9). When Jesus was baptized, he came from the water, and God declared who he was. The launching of his public ministry began with a remembrance that "You are my son, whom I dearly love. . . ." (Luke 3:21-22). Likewise, it is helpful for us to remember the origin of our faith or to recall our baptism. We can stir up the embers of our faith's beginnings and remember who we are.

Next, let us reclaim our mission. After his baptism, Jesus spent time in temptation where his identity was tested. He returned from the wilderness with a clear mission for His disciples. It is easy to lose sight of our clear faith mission. We can become preoccupied or too comfortable, forgetting our mission to join God in the transformation of the world. We can drift into spiritual amnesia, finding ourselves living through day after day with no real spiritual direction. The point of discipleship is about our individual lives being shaped into the image of Christ for purpose. We are being shaped **so that**. . . Discipleship is about the way God can use our transformed life as a living witness to his kingdom and an instrument of transformation in the world.

As we listen to Jesus' words, practice His teaching, grasp his vision of the Kingdom, absorb his spirit, and follow him in the way of servanthood, we are also awakened to his vision of transformation. As we become more in tune with God, the more we can see him at work around us and join him. How do we remain awake to that vision, to the presence of the Kingdom always around us? We can dig deeply into the prophetic visions of scripture, meaning that we spend time reading, studying and meditating on God's vision as expressed in scripture. We can keep company with the faithful cloud of witnesses and how God's kingdom was fulfilled in their lives. We can find strength and inspiration in our journey by reliving the journeys of others who have come before. We can also keep our eyes open for faithful servants presently among us and likewise share in their stories. We can do these things while keeping in community with fellow believers where we can share our struggles, our doubts, our questions, our fears and our hope. Finally, we can remain always in prayer, listening for the Spirit's call.

Make a Difference Conversation Guide

Session 1: Awakening

What is important is anyone's coming awake. . . . What is important is the moment of opening a life and feeling it touch—with an electric hiss and cry—the speckled mineral sphere, our present world.

-Annie Dillard

Prepare

This is your first meeting. While many of the people may know one another, it's important to help everyone feel comfortable. Simple food (like chips and dip) can go a long way to help ease tension. Use nametags, even if everyone feels they know one another. Make sure that the seating is comfortable and that everyone can easily view the screen for the video portion of the session.

Be sure to preview the video before the session. Work out any AV challenges you may encounter so that the video presentation will go as smoothly as possible.

The conversation questions following the video are suggestions. Pick a few you would like to use – you won't have time to use them all.

Be sure to allow time to get to the Take Action section. This community group experience is about making a difference, and the Take Action section is where group members will reflect on how they will make a difference in coming week. It is critical that you allow sufficient time for that reflection.

Gather a candle and a means to light it for the opening part of the session. Each time you meet, you'll begin by lighting a candle in honor of someone what has made a positive, God-shaped difference in the life of a group member. For this first session, you as the host will light and share. For future sessions, you'll invite a group member to light the candle in honor of someone and to provide a short testimony of why they chose to that person, sharing what God-shaped difference that person made in their life.

Session Overview

The first session is a very personal challenge to enter into a serious self-examination and reflection. This examination will explore God's individual call to each disciple into both a deeper commitment to Christ and into a renewed dedication to serving Christ and others, making a unique difference in the world. God's call to service is universal, meaning that each of us is called to find a unique place and way to serve. The challenge is to take the steps of responding to this call in a very direct and personal way, clarifying and responding to God's call to discipleship, service and witness.

Prayer

You may pray a brief prayer. For future sessions, invite someone in the group to pray. A printed prayer is provided each week, or they may pray extemporaneously.

Almighty God, you summon each of us to a life of service, of sacrifice if need be, and of the perfect joy that comes from living according to your will. We seek to discover your will for our lives—not in general terms but in the specific ways you have summoned each one of us, for we believe you indeed have a task for each of us. Bless our conversations, bless our meditations, and bless the decisions and the directions with which we emerge from this study together. We ask all of this in the name of Christ. Amen.

Candle Lighting

Each time we meet, we will begin by lighting a candle in honor of someone who has made a positive, God-shaped difference in the life of one of us. For the first session, you as host will light the candle in honor of someone and provide a short testimony of why you chose to that person, sharing what God-shaped difference that person made in your life.

Video

Show session 1 of *Make a Difference - AWAKENING*

You can access it at www.firstumc.org/g3hosts/

Password: **G3*2018**

Possible Discussion Questions (Choose a few for your focus. There likely won't be time to do them all.)

- The video mentions places of disruption. Why are places of disruption important?
- What are some things that cause us to fall asleep to God's call, or to stay asleep?
- What in our contemporary world makes us unable to see or hear the claim God makes upon us?
- What makes us resist God's call or claim on our lives?
- How have you heard the voice of the Spirit in the past? More recently?
- If we were to be serious in responding to God's call, what might we have to surrender or change in our lives?
- How has the Spirit awakened your passion and led you into action?
- Who are the disciples in your life who can provide clarity about how you can participate in God's kingdom mission?
- What areas in your life do you find the stirrings of spiritual discontent?

Take Action

As you conclude the session, give each group member a note card and a pen or pencil. Invite them to respond to these questions (for their eyes only):

1. What is keeping me from responding fully to God's invitation to be a servant and living witness to God's action in the world?
2. What steps can I take to awaken and totally live out God's invitation to discipleship and service?

Invite the group members to turn to the "Action Ideas" at the end of the chapter (pp. 40-41). Read these aloud together as a group.

Invite each participant to identify which action idea(s) he or she will commit to over the next week. Affirm the participants' response and commit to praying for that person to experience God in that action. If no one wants to share, model by going first, sharing briefly. Encourage others to speak by

asking “would anyone else like to share?” It’s important to not force anyone to share. Remember that this selection is highly personal. For this exercise, try not to allow discussion except for clarification.

Here are some possible action ideas:

1. Remember your baptism in practical ways, such as including the reminder in daily prayers, re-read your baptismal vows, or be reminded each time you shower or bathe.
2. Take a note card and write scripture proclaiming who you are in God (i.e. Luke 3:22, Romans 6:4, Galatians 3:26-27). Carry this in your wallet, purse, planner or other location where you’ll see it as a daily reminder.
3. Spend time reading and reflecting on scripture that focuses on God’s dream for the restoration and reconciliation of all God’s creation (i.e. Isaiah chs 40-66).
4. Find a mentor or accountability partner to volunteer or serve alongside.

Closing

A few of these sessions will close with the Wesley Covenant Prayer, an historic Methodist prayer from John Wesley’s Covenant Service. Invite everyone to join in praying this prayer together. You may want to print the prayer on cards or post it in your meeting space for all to read. Or you may pray it by having one person read it line by line, with the group responding by repeating the line.

The Wesley Covenant Prayer

*Lord, make me what you will.
I put myself fully into your hands.;
put me to doing, put me to suffering,
let me be employed for you, or laid aside for you,
let me be full, let me be empty,
let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and with a willing heart
give it all to your pleasure and disposal. Amen.*

Summary of Chapter 2: Who Are These People

"I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve."

–Albert Schweitzer

We all have a desire to be happy. In the U.S. it's embedded in our DNA and codified in the *Declaration of Independence*. Yet happiness seems to allude so many of us. Could it be that we are looking in the wrong places? What is it that makes happy people happy? Who are these people who have deep, unambiguous joy?

More often than not, people who are truly happy are people who have found how they can serve and make a Kingdom-shaped difference in the world. They've found their passion and a way to serve, whether in their profession, or in volunteering in the church or community, or in the longsuffering work for justice, equality, forgiveness, restoration, and reconciliation. *New York Times* columnist David Brooks describes such people as those who "radiate a sort of moral joy." They possess "the self-effacing virtues of people who are inclined to be useful but don't need to prove anything to the world: humility, restraint, reticence, temperance, respect, and soft self-discipline." (p.46)

People who serve in these ways are also connected to the power source (God). As Archbishop Desmond Tutu reportedly said "We are only the light bulbs. . . and our job is just to remain screwed in!" People like Becca Stevens at Magdalene / Thistle Farms and Margaret Palmer at Hillsborough House of Hope are able to do the work they do because they have developed deep patterns of prayer. It's through their spiritual practice that they remain connected to the power source (see John 15:4-6).

Through the cultivated spiritual practices like prayer we are better able to hear God's voice calling to us. The story of Samuel and Eli is a prime example (1 Samuel 3:1-11). It's also a reminder that hearing God's call on your life might cause you to lose sleep!

In the Methodist tradition, John Wesley and the early Methodists (re)discovered the power of an intentional, disciplined prayer practice. Wesley offered this challenge to one of his preachers, a challenge that speaks to us as well:

"O begin! Fix some part of every day for private exercises. . . . Whether you like it or no, read and pray daily. It is for your life; there is no other way, else you will be a trifler all your days. . . . Do justice to your own soul, give it time and means to grow. Do not starve yourself any longer."

There are many resources available to nourish us in development of our prayer life – from devotional books to *lectio divina* and Ignatian methods of praying scripture to podcasts like Pray-As-You-Go – there have never been more resources available to those who wish to develop or deepen their prayer life. Wesley's admonition, "O begin!" is a reminder to do just that.

The stories Harnish shares illustrate that Schweitzer was correct. "The people who are really happy are those who have sought and found their way to serve. They have learned to listen for the way the Spirit of God will speak to them because they practice the time-tested spiritual disciplines of the Christian life. They are ordinary people – just like us—who experience an extraordinary joy in knowing that their lives are making a Christ-like difference in the lives of the people around them and a Kingdom-shaped difference in the world." (p. 56)

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Session 2: Who Are These People?

“I don’t know what your destiny will be, but one thing I know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve.”

–Albert Schweitzer

Prepare

While many of the people may know one another, it’s important to help everyone feel comfortable. Simple food (like chips and dip) can go a long way to help ease tension. Use nametags, even if everyone feels they know one another. Make sure that the seating is comfortable and that everyone can easily view the screen for the video portion of the session.

Be sure to preview the video before the session. Work out any AV challenges you may encounter so that the video presentation will go as smoothly as possible.

The conversation questions following the video are suggestions. Pick a few you would like to use – you won’t have time to use them all.

Be sure to allow time to get to the Take Action section. This community group experience is about making a difference, and the Take Action section is where group members will reflect on how they will make a difference in coming week. It is critical that you allow sufficient time for that reflection.

This and subsequent sessions include a “check-in time” at the beginning of the session to share about experiences the week prior with the “Take Action” commitment from the previous session. Be prepared to share about your experience with the action step(s) you selected.

Gather a candle and a means to light it for the opening part of the session.

Session Overview

This week, we continue our exploration of how we might AWAKEN our passion and engage the many needs in our world. How can we find our place to serve? Last week, we invited God to awaken a passion within us. This week, we learn how to open ourselves to receive such a blessing of passion from God. What can we do to prepare? We’ll also look to role models in our lives to see examples of people who awaken to a passion and put that passion to work in a way that changes their life and their world. Recognizing these people in the world around us might help us become one of these people ourselves!

Check-In

Last week we decided on some action items to try as we work to make a difference. What was your experience with the “Take Action” items from last week?

Prayer

Invite someone in the group to pray. Personal heartfelt prayers are often preferable to printed prayers, but a printed prayer is provided each week, if someone would prefer it to praying extemporaneously.

Almighty God, you summon each of us to a life of service, of sacrifice if need be, and of the perfect joy that comes from living according to your will. We seek to discover your will for our lives—not in general terms but in the specific ways you have summoned each one of us, for we believe you indeed have a task

for each of us. Bless our conversations, bless our meditations, and bless the decisions and the directions with which we emerge from this study together. We ask all of this in the name of Christ.

Candle Lighting

Each time we meet, we will begin by lighting a candle in honor of someone who has made a positive, God-shaped difference in the life of one of us. Invite a group member to light the candle in honor of someone and to provide a short testimony of why they chose to do that person, sharing what God-shaped difference that person made in their life.

Video

Show session 2 of Make a Difference – WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE?

You can access it at firstumc.org/g3hosts

PW: **G3*2018**

Possible Discussion Questions (Choose a few for your focus. There likely won't be time to do them all.)

Serving

- The opening quote from Schweitzer (above) refers to "service." How does our world tend to view people who are "servants" (those who serve others)? Is a servant typically a desirable role in our society? How could we view service to others differently? Why do you think Schweitzer connects happiness and service?
- How do you feel about the stories of Becca Stevens at Magdalene / Thistle Farms and Margaret Palmer with Hillsborough House of Hope? What do they inspire in you?
- Many of us may not be able to do what Becca Stevens and Margaret Palmer did, but each of us can reflect the light of Christ in countless small ways every day. Service for Christ doesn't need to be grandiose or complicated. It can be in the simplest acts.
What are some of the small ways you have found happiness through simple service that nevertheless made a difference?
- When have you been the recipient of someone else reflecting the light of Christ in a simple way?

Staying connect to the Power Source (p. 50-51)

- What is the power source that Harnish describes? How does one stay connected to the power source?
- How is your connection to the power source? How often are you aware of this connection, and how strong does it feel?
- What disciplines (daily practices) can help us stay connected to the power source and help us to find our calling? (Discuss the four spiritual disciplines introduced on p. 52).

"God's call usually comes to people who practice the spiritual disciplines that enable them to hear and respond to God's Spirit. They are consistent in their practice of **worship**. They soak themselves in the words of **Scripture**. They develop patterns of **prayer** that keep them awake and responsive to the new things God is doing and through which they discern the guidance of the Spirit. They **live in community** with other faithful disciples."

Which of these disciplines (underlined above) do you currently practice? How could you adopt the others? What specifically can you do this week to make these four practices part of your life? (see “Take Action” below for some suggestions for prayer) Do you think practicing these four disciplines would help you discern where God will lead you and your passions?

Take Action

Hand out note cards along with something to write with. Invite the group to turn to page 59 in *Make a Difference* and read aloud, in turns, the five “Action Ideas.” These options center on making space in your daily life for prayer – for communicating with God.

Ask each person to choose one of these ideas they will commit to try this week and write it down (they can paraphrase; it doesn’t have to be exact). Encourage them to carry this card in a place where they will see it several times daily – a purse, a wallet, or a planner. Ask the group members to say aloud, one person at a time, which item they are committing to try this week. As each person speaks, affirm their commitment and commit to pray for that person this week that they will experience a connection to the power source and find joy in serving others.

If there are people in your group who aren’t used to praying daily, consider explaining prayer as a time when we give voice to our thoughts and emotions that we “wish I had chance to tell God how I feel about this. . . .” Prayer is also a time to give silence a place in our life, as it is often in the silence that we sense God and what God “wishes he had a chance to tell us how he feels about this. . . .”

Another resource that might be of interest to those looking to develop a prayer practice is the podcast “Pray As You Go” (www.pray-as-you-go.org). These 10-12 minute audio devotionals are a wonderful way to explore prayer.

If you only do one thing this week to improve the chances of hearing God’s call to you and finding your passion in life, make it 5 minutes of sincere prayer each day. Commit to this one practice and it will change your life!

Closing

You may choose to close with the hymn text printed on pp. 59-60.

Alternatively, you can close with the Wesley Covenant Prayer, which was introduced in Session 1.

You may pray it by having one person read it line by line, with the group responding by repeating the line.

The Wesley Covenant Prayer

*Lord, make me what you will.
I put myself fully into your hands.;
 put me to doing, put me to suffering,
 let me be employed for you, or laid aside for you,
 let me be full, let me be empty,
 let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and with a willing heart
 give it all to your pleasure and disposal. Amen.*

Summary of Chapter 3: Children, Go Where I send You

The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.

-Frederick Buechner

Being a part of a worshipping congregation ignites our passion, nurtures our faith, unites us with other disciples, sustains our spirits and empowers our witness. It also is the primary means by which the Church proclaims the biblical word in the public arena. But as Jesus taught and lived, the Christian life is not defined primarily by church attendance. Rather, we live our discipleship in the world, outside the church. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, "The Church is the presence of God in the world. . .the invasion of the world by miracle. . ."

If we are God's masterpieces, the Church might be considered a workshop. Our attendance is essential for the mission, but it is not the mission itself. We have been given the ministry of reconciliation (II Cor. 5:18) which requires us to be sent out into the world.

Our life of discipleship begins in the church but is completed in the world. The urgent question besetting the church is how we live the Christian life in the world. Certainly, we are all called to love one another, as Christ loved us. We are called to live out the truths Jesus taught about God's kingdom in a world that is broken and blind to that truth.

Yet, we are also called to a unique, individual ministry—that good work God created us to do. In order to cooperate with that mission, most of us need to stop what we are doing to hear God's voice. In a culture that places a high value on busyness, we must act to eliminate hurry from our lives and stop long enough to hear God. God commanded a Sabbath day of rest to help accomplish that. In order to reclaim the idea of ceasing in a world that does not value or reward it, some congregations have claimed a season of Sabbath, held retreats focused on contemplative prayer, organized backpacking or wilderness trips, or held small group studies on discovering who God is. We must identify and implement specific ways that will effectively enable us to stop. "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10).

Next, we must look and listen. If we allow, the Holy Spirit will open our eyes to see the world around us as Jesus does, seeing through the lens of transformation, reconciliation, and restoration. Likewise, we should tune in to hear what the Spirit is speaking through prayer, scripture, worship, fellow disciples or by other means. Imagine if we substituted the time and energy we spend looking at the world through the eyes of our culture and media for time looking through God's perception. Or if we tuned out the voices shouting in our current politics and news in favor of the voice of the Spirit. If we can stop, look and listen, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we begin to find those places where our deep gladness meets the world's deep hunger.

Discovery alone, however, does not equal discipleship. Joining in God's holy mission requires our participation. We must cooperate with God's craftsmanship by yielding to His hand and serving as He intends. When God calls us, he is calling us to action. Consider what he is calling you to do and get going.

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Session 3: Children, Go Where I Send You

The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.

-Frederick Buechner

Prepare

While many of the people may know one another, it's important to help everyone feel comfortable. Simple food (like chips and dip) can go a long way to help ease tension. Use nametags, even if everyone feels they know one another. Make sure that the seating is comfortable and that everyone can easily view the screen for the video portion of the session.

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Be sure to allow time to get to the Take Action section. This community group experience is about making a difference, and the Take Action section is where group members will reflect on how they will make a difference in coming week. It is critical that you allow sufficient time for that reflection.

Notice the "check-in time" at the beginning of the session. This is a time to share about experiences the week prior with the "Take Action" commitment from the previous session. Be prepared to share about your experience with the action step(s) you selected.

Gather a candle and a means to light it for the opening part of the session.

Check-In

Last week we made a commitment to an action item to make a difference. What was your experience with the "Take Action" commitments last week?

Overview

During this session we will examine the ways in which we hear God calling and the way we experience God equipping us to answer that call. We will identify and face the reasons we often leave our discipleship in the sanctuaries of the church and explore how we can change our focus to see the world around us, and our call to ministry in it, through the eyes of Christ.

Prayer

Invite someone in the group to pray. Personal heartfelt prayers are often preferable to printed prayers, but a printed prayer is provided each week, if someone would prefer it to praying extemporaneously.

Lord, you call each of us in the midst of the routine and busyness of our lives. You call us to actions and deeds of genuine discipleship. Open our eyes to see the faces of those in need around us. Open our ears to hear the cries of the need, broken and hurting around the world and right here with us. Convict us and show us how you would have us serve you and participate in building up the Kingdom here. In the name of Christ Jesus. Amen.

Candle Lighting

Each time we meet, we will begin by lighting a candle in honor of someone what has made a positive, God-shaped difference in the life of one of us. Invite a group member to light the candle in honor of someone and to provide a short testimony of why they chose to that person, sharing what God-shaped difference that person made in their life.

Video

Show session 3 of Make a Difference – CHILDREN, GO WHERE I SEND YOU

You can access it at firstumc.org/g3hosts

PW: **G3*2018**

Possible Discussion Questions (Choose a few for your focus. There likely won't be time to do them all.)

- How does the video clarify the idea that the church is not a building but instead is the work of the world of those committed to Christ?
- What is the meaning of the phrase “the transformation of the world”?
- How is the idea of stopping, ceasing activity a counter-cultural thing?
- What do you need to do in order to stop?
- As you look and listen, where do you think “your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet”?

Take Action

Remind the group members of Harnish’s suggestion that we should stop, look and listen for God’s action and call in our lives. Invite the group members to turn to the “Action Ideas” at the end of the chapter. Encourage the group to review these silently, reflecting on how one or more of these ideas can help them to stop, look, and listen for God’s call amid the needs of the world around them.

Invite each participant to identify which action idea(s) he or she will commit to over the next week and write it down. Ask them to keep that note in a wallet or purse or somewhere where they can refer to it at least three times each day.

Here are some possible action ideas:

1. Be intentional in taking Sabbath rest and renewal.
2. Evaluate your priorities and identify the changes you need to make or the things you need to say “no” to.
3. Identify your gifts, talents, abilities, interests, experiences and passion and list at least one place where your heart meets the world’s need. There is a PDF booklet to guide you in discerning your spiritual gifts available for download at www.firstumc.org/adult-education/.

Closing

Close with a time of silent prayer. Share that during the silence you will call out some topics or areas for prayer. Give the participants several moments of silence to pray for each area, then move on to the next area.

Let us pray.

- I invite you to pray for yourself, for whatever need you are feeling right now [silent prayer]

- Pray that you might stop, look and listen to God's call and action in your life. [silent prayer]
- Pray that you might have the courage to respond to God's call, and that you might see how God is at work in your life [silent prayer]
- Pray for your community of faith that they will help to equip you to be a bringer of God's hope, light, love and healing wherever you go. [silent prayer]
- Now, offer a genuine prayer of thanksgiving. Remember that God loves you, forgives you, hears your prayers, and equips you for service to make a difference in your family, in your church, in your community, and in the world. [silent prayer]

Invite everyone to close the prayer time by praying the Prayer of St Francis together.

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace.

*Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
 where there is injury, pardon;
 where there is doubt, faith;
 where there is despair, hope;
 where there is darkness, light;
 where there is sadness, joy.*

O, Divine Master,

*grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
 to be understood as to understand;
 to be loved as to love;*

For it is in giving that we receive;

*it is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
 it is in dying that we are born again to eternal life.*

Summary of Chapter 4: Go Together

“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

-African Proverb

In the process of discovering our passion and the desire to make a Christlike difference in the world, we are likely to discover some complex challenges and be confronted by intractable issues like power, injustice, racism, and evil that seem impossible to change. When we set out to participate in God’s transformation of the world, we soon discover that we can’t do it alone. The good news is we don’t have to. God never intended for any of us to make the long journey toward injustice, reconciliation, and peace on our own. God intends for us to make a difference together.

Make a Difference Conversation Guide

Session 4: Go Together

“If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together.”

-African Proverb

Prepare

While many of the people may know one another, it's important to help everyone feel comfortable. Simple food (like chips and dip) can go a long way to help ease tension. Use nametags, even if everyone feels they know one another. Make sure that the seating is comfortable and that everyone can easily view the screen for the video portion of the session.

Be sure to preview the video before the session. Work out any AV challenges you may encounter so that the video presentation will go as smoothly as possible.

The conversation questions following the video are suggestions. Pick a few you would like to use – you won't have time to use them all.

Be sure to allow time to get to the Take Action section. This community group experience is about making a difference, and the Take Action section is where group members will reflect on how they will make a difference in coming week. It is critical that you allow sufficient time for that reflection.

This and subsequent sessions include a “check-in time” at the beginning of the session to share about experiences the week prior with the “Take Action” commitment from the previous session. Be prepared to share about your experience with the action step(s) you selected.

Gather a candle and a means to light it for the opening part of the session.

Check-In

What was your experience with the “Take Action” challenge last week? Share with one another ways in which you tried to “Stop, Look, and Listen.” What did you hear when listening?

Session Overview

In previous weeks, we have awakened our passion, we have prepared ourselves through practicing spiritual disciplines to find joy in serving, we have learned to stop, look, and listen for opportunities to serve beyond the church. This week, we focus on the fact that mission and discipleship are multiplied many times over by the involvement of others. There are no “Lone Rangers” in service and mission. When we allow God to awaken our passion, there is often an excitement at the core of seeking ways to serve. Then, as we look beyond the church to engage, we are confronted with the reality that things in this world aren't the way God wants them to be. The more clearly we see Christ, the more our heart is broken by the things that break God's heart. As we uncover complex challenges, we find evil that seems impossible to change. Our newly awakened passion could be overcome by this realization of the overwhelming size of the need we discover when we begin to see the world through God's eyes.

Prayer

Invite someone in the group to pray. Personal heartfelt prayers are often preferable to printed prayers, but a printed prayer is provided each week, if someone would prefer it to praying extemporaneously.

Gracious and ever-loving God: You have created us to live in community, to live together in genuine fellowship with others, both near and far. As we explore the importance of community in discipleship, open our eyes, our ears, and our minds to your presence with us. Remind us that we are never alone because your love, your grace and your power surround us every moment of our lives. We pray in the name of Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Candle Lighting

Each time we meet, we will begin by lighting a candle in honor of someone what has made a positive, God-shaped difference in the life of one of us. Invite a group member to light the candle in honor of someone and to provide a short testimony of why they chose to that person, sharing what God-shaped difference that person made in their life.

Video

Show session 4 of Make a Difference –GO TOGETHER

You can access it at www.firstumc.org/g3hosts/

Password: **G3*2018**

Possible Discussion Questions (Choose a few for your focus. There likely won't be time to do them all.)

Don't try it alone – (pg 88) “God never intended for any of us to make the long journey toward justice, reconciliation, and peace on our own. God intends for us to make a difference together...When we set out to make a difference, we soon discover that we cannot do it alone.”

- How does fellowship with others help ease the burden of attempting to make a difference?
- What are some of the practical and spiritual benefits that come from having a partner in mission or service?
- How does the “frontier mentality” on pg 87 (“on the frontier, there was no room for wasting time and energy on things that really didn't matter very much.” What can this teach us about how to interact with other people who have awakened a passion?

Do the Good Stuff – (page 92-93) “There's more to life as a disciple of Jesus Christ than sitting in a pew on Sunday morning, being a nice person, and adding a little religion to our resume...The church has been called to the great task of being the living expression of God's kingdom.”

- What does this mean? What “more” are we to do? How is this “the good stuff”?
- Read the passage from Acts 2:42-47 on page 93 out loud. That is a picture of a passionate and committed **bunch** of Christians! This describes three important practices:
 1. **Commit to an (Un)Common Mission (pg 93-97)**
 2. **Observe an (Un)Common Ritual (pg 97-101)**
 3. **Practice an (Un)Common Generosity (pg 101-105)**

Invite someone to summarize each of these three practices. Why does the author add “(Un)” to the front of each practice?

It is these three practices that bind the group together because they are “common” to all the members of the group. It is these same three practices, though, that set the group apart from everyone else around them because these practices were not common outside their group. Are there ways you can make these three practices a part of your life beyond Sunday?

Take Action

Hand out note cards along with something to write with. Turn to page 109 in Jim Harnish's book and read aloud each of the five "Action Ideas". Each of these options centers around making space in your daily life for the three (Un)Common practices or otherwise engaging others. Each person should choose and write down, one of the action ideas that they will pursue over the next week. When you engage with other people, positive things happen, and you find yourself "doing the good stuff" and the evil that was so overwhelming once, can now be conquered.

Closing

Close with a prayer. You may want to use the hymn text and prayer on p. 108, praying it aloud as a group.

Summary of Chapter 5: Into the Crucible of Pain and Hope

Making a cross-shaped difference in the world will be uncomfortable, even painful. It will mean going to places you would rather avoid. It can mean experiencing deep pain and suffering. It's in those places that your great gladness and the world's great need meet. The crucible of pain can be the place where hope is born.

We have all experienced those times when "words won't work." Tragedy strikes. 9/11. The Pulse Nightclub shooting. The devastation of hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria. What words can we possibly say in the midst of the pain and heartbreak? What can we do? How can followers of Christ make a difference in the places of injustice, pain, and suffering?

Harnish reminds us that Paul promises the Holy Spirit "help(s) us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words" (Romans 8:26). The Old Testament prophet Jeremiah, often called the weeping prophet, also shares the desperation of praying in the midst of pain (see Jeremiah 8:18, 21; 9:1).

Harnish states that "Making a difference in the lives of people who experience oppression, suffering, or injustice begins when we choose to enter into their experience, listen to their story, and join them in their pain. In the same way God's Son became one of us to share our human life, we are drawn closer to Jesus by drawing closer to people in pain." (p.114)

In the midst of great pain, we can be surprised by hope. As agents of God's healing love, we are called to empower and strengthen those who suffer with God-centered, biblically-rooted hope (p.115). John Bunyan described it this way: "Hope has a thick skin, and will endure many a blow." We remember the biblical promise that God will set the world right, and one day will "wipe away every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more. There will be no mourning, crying, or pain anymore, for the former things have passed away" (Revelation 21:4). In the midst of tragedy and pain, we are reminded that "sometimes the church is called to be an enclave of heaven in the middle of hell." (p. 119)

So how do we enter in the pain, suffering, injustice and brokenness of the world in a way that enables us to make a tangible, Christ-shaped, hope-energizing difference? (p.120) Harnish refers us to the hymn of Christ's humility in Philippians 2:5-11 and lists three transformative steps to take along the way through pain toward hope.

1. **Get yourself out of the way.** *Jesus emptied himself* of all but love. We must empty ourselves of arrogant pride and get our self-absorbed attitudes out of the way. We are called to be the self-emptying, flesh-and-blood agents of God's incarnate, reconciling love and grace in our own time and place.
2. **Become a servant.** *Jesus took the form of a slave.* Being a servant (the Greek word *doulos* literally translated is *slave*) means that we are not in charge here. We must set aside our agenda and become servants who offer our lives in love to meet the needs of others.
3. **Learn obedience.** *Jesus became obedient.* We can learn obedience to the way of Christ by entering into the suffering of others. Harnish lists Trevor Hudson's four essential elements in the "pilgrimage of pain and hope": Encounter, Reflection, Transformation, and Obedient Action.

We don't need to travel to foreign countries to experience transformation in the way of Christ, "It can happen in your own community and through your own relationships as you follow the pattern of encounter, reflection, and transformation that leads to obedient action" (p.127). If we listen deeply, we will hear Christ's word of hope – the word that works when all other words fail (p.128).

Make a Difference Conversation Guide
Session 5: In the Crucible of Pain and Hope

If you want to know whether God is alive, you must go, not to where all is well, but into places of brokenness and suffering. . . . There are depths of reality, dimensions of God, releases of healing energy, that flow into the world only through the power of faithful suffering.

-Peter Storey

Prepare

While many of the people in your community group may know one another, it's important to help everyone feel comfortable. Simple food can go a long way to help ease tension. Use nametags, even if everyone feels they know one another. Make sure that the seating is comfortable and that everyone can easily view the screen for the video portion of the session.

Be sure to preview the video before the session. Work out any AV challenges you may encounter so that the video presentation will go as smoothly as possible.

As with previous sessions, you will begin the session with a check-in asking for experiences with the Take Action commitments from the previous week. Allow some time for people to briefly share their experience.

The conversation questions following the video are suggestions. Pick one or two you would like to use – you won't have time to use them all.

Be sure to allow for time to get to the Take Action section. This community group experience is about making a difference, and the Take Action section is where group members will reflect on how they will make a difference in coming week. It is critical that you allow sufficient time for that reflection.

Check-In

What was your experience with the "Take Action" challenge last week?

Overview

In this session you will explore how suffering, pain, and turmoil are a part of human experience. As we enter more deeply into the world, we will encounter these difficult times. Suffering can lead us to greater strength, stronger faith and deeper hope – not wishful thinking, but powerful hope that can change our lives and heal the world. As we discussed in the last session, this is often best experienced in community. We'll also explore how the mindset of Jesus, as expressed in Philippians 2, helps us to embody that hope by living in a self-sacrificial way, becoming servants, and learning obedience.

Prayer

Invite someone in the group to open with a brief prayer. Or you might offer this or a similar prayer:

Almighty God, as we grow in our commitment to respond to your claim on our lives by serving our sisters and brothers, we seek your presence, your power, and your peace. We trust your promises, we seek to live in your love, we claim the Christ as our Lord, and we recognize your presence among us as we gather. May we be open to one another and to you in this time. Amen.

Candle Lighting

Each time we meet, we will begin by lighting a candle in honor of someone who has made a positive, God-shaped difference in the life of one of us. Invite a group member to light the candle in honor of someone and to provide a short testimony of why they chose to that person, sharing what God-shaped difference that person made in their life.

Video

Show session 5 of Make a Difference – INTO THE CRUCIBLE OF PAIN AND HOPE

You can access it at www.firstumc.org/g3hosts/

Password: **G3*2018**

Possible Discussion Questions

- What new insights did you gain about pain and hope from the video or from your reading this week?
- What kinds of obstacles often prevent us from entering places of pain?
- How is hope different from wishful thinking?
- What is the source of hope in times of great pain, such in the aftermath of tragedy or loss? How does hope at such times differ from hope we experience more regularly?
- What places of pain exist in your community?
- Harnish comments on living with the mindset of Jesus, exploring Philippians 2:5-11, an early hymn (sung poem) about Christ's obedience. Invite someone to read Philippians 2:5-11, either from a Bible (or Bible app) or as printed on p. 120. Invite the group to summarize the three transformative steps Harnish lists on pp 121-125. (You might want to divide the group into three teams, each taking one section, then reporting back a summary to the full group)
- Why is it difficult to set aside our own interests, become a servant, and learn obedience?
- What would it mean for you to adopt the mindset of Jesus with regard to other people or your community? What would you do, practically speaking, to become a servant? Who would you obey? Which of your own interests would you set aside?
- The title of this chapter is "Into the Crucible of Pain and Hope." How do you define crucible?
- In what ways can active discipleship (actively growing in our love of God and others) be likened to a crucible?
- How can pain and hope abide in the same crucible? What is the meaning of this pairing?
- How are you challenged and inspired to step into pain and hope?

Take Action

Invite the group to spend some time in silence reflecting on the questions and action ideas on pp. 131-132.

Invite each participant to identify which action idea(s) he or she will commit to over the next week and write it down. Ask them to keep that note in a wallet or purse or somewhere where they can refer to it at least three times each day.

Here are some possible action ideas:

4. Look for a way to enter into someone's pain, sharing God's healing love and offering hope.
5. Practice humility by letting go of self-absorbed attitudes. Remind yourself regularly, "It's not about me."

6. Go where there are brothers and sisters suffering around or near you, and immerse yourself in their pain. Plan for a one-day or multiple-day immersion experience—preferably in community with others. Listen deeply with openness to what the Spirit might teach you.
7. Practice the servanthood of Christ by identifying the real needs of those around you and finding a practical way to serve them.

Closing

Close with a prayer. You may want to use the prayer on pp. 131-132, praying it aloud as a group.

Summary of Chapter 6: From Here to Kingdom Come

We began this study with a question from Mary Oliver: “Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?” To answer it, we must “begin with the end in mind,” as Stephen Covey would say. What we believe about the end affects how we behave in the present. Where we imagine the world is headed in the future impacts what we think and how we behave today. Harnish likens the journey to assembling a jigsaw puzzle (hence the book’s cover illustration). “In order to find out where your piece fits in, you need to see what the final picture will be” (p.134).

So what does that picture look like? Some say that “this world is on a one-way, downhill roller coaster towards destruction and our task is to prepare to leave it and get on to heaven.” There is another, more hopeful, helpful, and biblically faithful vision of the future is an understanding that “God’s goal is not this earth’s destruction, but its redemption.” Eventually God’s dwelling will be here with humankind, the new Jerusalem coming down *from* heaven *to* earth (Rev. 21:2-3). All things are made new and God’s will is done *on earth* as in heaven. Catholic theologian Hans Küng said it this way, “God’s kingdom is creation healed.”

The great thing is that, as followers of the Jesus way, God is inviting us to join in the action. Pastor and author Eugene Peterson declares, “We are not spectators to a grand cosmic show. We are *in* the show. But we are not running it.” Harnish reminds us “the coming of God’s kingdom is only and always God’s work, but we can live *now* in ways that are consistent with the way things will be *then*. By the power of the Holy Spirit, even small, apparently insignificant things can make an eternal difference.” (p.135).

What does this have to do with you and me? Harnish says, “Everything! Because the end toward which we are going determines the means by which we get there. What we hope to become is what we are now becoming. . . .” (p.137)

“The question for us as faithful disciples is not ‘When is Jesus coming again?’ but ‘What will I be doing when he gets here?’ The question is not ‘When will Jesus’ vision of the Kingdom of God be fulfilled?’ but ‘How am I participating in that Kingdom among us right now?’ Each of us can find ways to be faithful servants, participating in the Kingdom among us now.” (p.140)

It can be easy to feel overwhelmed by the magnitude of the challenges we face – greed, injustice, oppression, bigotry. We might begin to think that the little things we do don’t really make a difference. Jesus’ parable of the mustard seed is helpful to remember here (Matthew 13:31-35, Mark 4:30-32, Luke 13:18-19). The Kingdom of God is like a tiny mustard seed. It is the smallest of all the seeds, but it grows into a bush where the birds of the air build their nests. Amy-Jill Levine points out four ways this parable can guide us:

- “No seed is, or should be, seen as insignificant; each contains life within it. . . . Even small actions, or hidden actions, have the potential to produce great things.”
- “Some things need to be *left alone*. . . . Not everything, or even everyone, needs our constant attention.”
- “Sometimes we need to *get out of the way*. . . . Who sowed it is much less important than the tree into which the seed grows.”
- “The kingdom of heaven is found in what today we might call ‘our own backyard.’” (pp. 142-143).

Each of us can do something, some small thing, to make a positive difference in the social, political, and economic systems that surround us. Mother Teresa reminded us that we are called to do small things with great love. In the end, our calling is to not to be successful, but to be obedient. We need the encouragement of our fellow Jesus followers to persevere in this obedient work of the Reign and Rule of God. “Let us not get tired of doing good, because in time we’ll have a harvest if we don’t give up.” (Galatians 6:9).

Make a Difference Conversation Guide
Session 6: From Here to Kingdom Come

*We join our work to Heaven's gift. . .
High Heaven's Kingdom come on earth.*

-Wendell Berry

"Stubborn Ounces"
By Bonaro W. Overstreet

(To One Who Doubts the Worth of Doing Anything If You Can't Do Everything)

You say the little efforts that I make
will do no good: they never will prevail
to tip the hovering scale
where Justice hangs in balance.

I don't think I ever thought they would.
But I am prejudiced beyond debate
in favor of my right to choose which side
shall feel the stubborn ounces of my weight.

[<https://poetrying.wordpress.com/2013/08/03/stubborn-ounces-bonaro-w-overstreet/>]

Prepare

This is the final session of this study. The last part of this guide provides an outline for an act of commitment to affirm the work of making a difference. Take some time to read through it and think about how your group might enter into this time of celebration and commitment.

Be sure to preview the video before the session. Work out any AV challenges you may encounter so that the video presentation will go as smoothly as possible. Make sure that the seating is comfortable and that everyone can easily view the screen for the video portion of the session.

The conversation questions following the video are suggestions. Pick a few you would like to use – you won't have time to use them all.

Gather a candle and a means to light it for the opening part of the session.

Check-In

Ask: What was your experience with the "Take Action" challenge last week?

Overview

Where we feel we're going affects how we live today. This session lifts up the biblical understanding that God's plan and purpose for the world is to redeem all of creation -- that all things will be made new. We are called to participate with God in that redemptive work. We are partners with God in making a true difference for the transformation of the world.

Prayer

Invite someone in the group to open with a brief prayer. Or you might offer this or a similar prayer:

Almighty God, you have called each of us to live a life that makes a difference and seeks to shape the world according to your kingdom. Forgive our attempts to run from that call and to use false excuses for failing to live up to your dream. Make each of us instruments of your grace and peace in all that we do, and challenge us to be agents of reconciliation, redemption, and renewal in the here and now. We offer this prayer in the name of Christ our Lord. Amen.

Candle Lighting

Each time we meet, we will begin by lighting a candle in honor of someone what has made a positive, God-shaped difference in the life of one of us. Invite a group member to light the candle in honor of someone and to provide a short testimony of why they chose to that person, sharing what God-shaped difference that person made in their life.

Video

Show session 6 of *Make a Difference* –FROM HERE TO KINGDOM COME

You can access it at www.firstumc.org/g3hosts/

Password: **G3*2018**

Possible Discussion Questions (Choose a few for your focus. There likely won't be time to do them all.)

- How is the coming of the kingdom of God described in the book? How does that compare to your understanding of where the world is ultimately heading - the goal toward which all things are moving?
- The speakers on the video talk about mustard seeds. Where do you see mustard seeds, tiny seeds of God's kingdom, in your life or in our community?
- What does the phrase "redemption of the world" mean to you? What will a fully redeemed world like? Describe it in as much detail as much detail as possible. How did you arrive at this picture?
- What role do we human beings play in the redemption of the world? What role can you as an individual play in the redemption of the world? What difference can you make? How?
- On p. 136, there is a lengthy quote from Archbishop Desmond Tutu. In it, he lists several pieces of evidence for the "ugliness" of the world. What other evidence do you see as "ugliness" in the world?

Tutu goes on to say that God enlists us to be fellow works in redeeming and transforming the world. He says the victory is assured because the death and resurrection of Jesus declares forever that light has overcome darkness and life has overcome death. If we believe in the redemption of the world, then our future is one in which "ugliness" is gone. What can we do to live this future in the present, living in a way that diminishes ugliness completely?

- On pp. 137-138, Harnish lists six areas in which disciples can be active in living the future in the present. This list is illustrative, not exhaustive. List some other concerns that focus on a renewed creation and redemption of the world. These could be areas in which you are involved or would like to become involved.

Say: We're going to pray silently for one minute, reflecting on these areas listed in the book and the ones we've listed together. After that minute is over, I want you to choose one of these areas in which you could be more directly involved – giving your time, energy, and service.

[1 minute of silence]

Say: Write down your area or areas where you want to be more directly involved. Now write down one or two next steps you can take in the next three days to make a difference in that area. Sometime between now and when you go to bed, I encourage you to make a list of next steps for the coming two weeks, the next two months, and the coming year.

Ask: How is your involvement in one or more of these areas already enriching your life while at the same time moving – perhaps ever so slowly– toward a redeemed world?

Take some time as a group to celebrate the involvement of group members in seeking to make a difference in the world and redeem all of creation.

- Ask someone in the group to read the parable of the mustard seed in Luke 13:18-19. Invite the group to reflect on Bonaro Overstreet's poem "Stubborn Ounces" printed at the beginning of this session's conversation guide[also at <https://poetrying.wordpress.com/2013/08/03/stubborn-ounces-bonaro-w-overstreet/>]
Read it aloud together (don't miss the parenthetical note at the beginning of the poem!).

Say: One of the great frustrations for those excited about the coming Kingdom is that we can't do everything, or solve the really big issues first. Harnish reminds us that the journey is one of incremental steps. We may not be able to have much influence on international policy, for instance, but we can feed our hungry neighbors and welcome strangers as our sisters and brothers.

Ask: What is a single step that you can take to help move the world toward redemption? What is a small way you can make a big difference? Where will you place the "stubborn ounces" of your weight?

Take Action

Invite the group to spend some time in silence reflecting on the questions and action ideas on pp. 152-153 in *Make a Difference*.

Invite each participant to identify which action idea(s) he or she will commit to over the next week and write it down on a note card. Ask them to keep that note in a wallet or purse or somewhere where they can refer to it several times each day.

As this is the last session, decide on a way that you will continue to check-in with one another. Perhaps you'd like to schedule a meal together in a week or two, or check-in with one another via email or social media to share how you are taking action to make a difference.

Closing – Commissioning to Make a Difference

As you bring this session and this study to a close, take some time to reflect as a group.

Challenge each person to name one or two things he or she has learned over the course of the study.

Ask the group members to identify one way in which he or she has changed as a result of reading the book and participating in the study.

Encourage each person to name one way in which he or she has become unsettled, uneasy, or uncomfortable as a result of reading the book and being part of this study.

Ask: How might God be calling you to do something that you are uniquely able to do to make a difference?

Once everyone has had an opportunity to share, invite them to join in an act of commissioning.

Provide copies of the brief act of commitment service on the last page. Explain that the parts labeled “One” can be any member of the group as they feel led. It’s good to have more than one person take the lead on the “One” parts, and two or more voices can read them together if that’s how the Spirit moves. The group will respond together.

An Act of Commitment and Commissioning to Make a Difference in the World

The parts labeled "ONE" may be read by any member of the group. A different person can read each time.

One: God is calling each of us to be agents of change,
to overcome the darkness with the light of Christ's love.
Will you serve in such a way in your family, your community, and
elsewhere?

Group: Yes, we will.

One: Do you believe God has called you to a specific ministry and witness, and
that God will equip you to carry out that task?

Group: Yes, we do.

One: Will you earnestly pray for one another as each seeks out and initiates
their specific ministries in the community and the world?

Group: Yes, we will.

One: Will you give God the glory for any and all progress and continue to view
yourself as a valuable tool in the hands of a loving God?

Group: Yes, we will.

One: Therefore know that God has commissioned you to the ministry of
redemption and active discipleship. You are not alone in these tasks. God
and your fellow disciples are with you.

Group: Thanks be to God! Amen.

Lord, make me what you will.

I put myself fully into your hands.;

put me to doing, put me to suffering,

let me be employed for you, or laid aside for you,

let me be full, let me be empty,

let me have all things, let me have nothing.

I freely and with a willing heart

give it all to your pleasure and disposal. Amen.