

CHRISTIAN OUTREACH DEPARTMENT

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The **purpose** of the Christian Outreach Department is to encourage the Christian walk of the members, emphasizing "Ye are the salt of the earth... Ye are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:13a, 14a) and to reach out to the faith community with the WCTU total abstinence message.

Goals: To exemplify Christ in all ways; to know Him in His fullness and in a growing relationship; to influence others to know Christ; to love Him and to serve Him wholeheartedly.

A basic list of **projects** for this department is given below. Use the interests and creativity of your members to add other projects but use the purpose of the department as a guide for the correct placement of the projects.

1. Observe Noontide prayer each day, praying for the work of the WCTU around the world.
2. Have a devotional at each WCTU meeting. Devotions have been included in each Program Kit and each *World Bulletin* contains a devotional. You may invite a minister to give one and/or ask members to prepare devotionals.
3. Promote personal devotional time (Bible study and prayer). You may journal the experience.
4. Be an active participant in your church. Seek to invite non-church members to attend services.
5. Conduct a prayer walk. Take material from the *World Bulletin* about activities in various countries. Share the information and then have prayer. You may develop it as various stations around the room and have the members move from one to another. You may give them a simple reminder of each one so they can continue to pray after the meeting.
6. Form a group of mothers, grandmothers, and friends of children to pray regularly and specifically for the safety, health, and education of the children in your area.. Also pray they will remain drug-free.
7. Telephone or E-mail a WCTU Prayer Chain. Send current requests and needs.

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DEVOTIONS TO BE USED DURING THE YEAR

The Scripture: John 13:35:

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

Jesus' disciples were very different personalities; some were ordinary fishermen, one was a zealot, and there even was a tax collector. Some demanded to have leadership positions, whereas others were quiet dreamers. Some were people of faith and strong vision, others practical people who did not hesitate to get to work. Jesus had called each one of them to work within the guideline of *A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. (John 13:34).*

In which way had Jesus loved his disciples? His love had remained from day to day, regardless of whether the disciples were worthy of his love. The disciples' moods changed, they often upset Jesus, and sometimes they were not trustworthy. But the love Jesus showed them lasted through it all. He could rejoice even in the smallest steps of progress and most of all, He had plenty of mercy and forgiveness. Jesus acted the way He had taught others: *It is more blessed to give than to receive. (Acts 20:35).*

But there was something that Jesus really hoped for and asked from his disciples: that they love one another. It was not only based on the knowledge that it would be easier for everyone to live in a loving atmosphere. An atmosphere of love was important for building the kingdom of God. Others would see the love the disciples had for one another and begin to ask where such love came from. That would create in them a desire to get to know Jesus and the basis of Christian faith, which would open up new paths for the Gospel.

This is the case even today. The love we share between one another and loving behavior even towards those who are not of our faith is the best basis for the Gospel. If we speak out words of goodness but have no love in our hearts, we will do more harm than good in building God's kingdom. It is a huge challenge for us. It is so difficult to extinguish our spirit of judgment and maintain an atmosphere of love. Having been saved by the grace of God, we don't need to exhaust ourselves in assuring our own salvation. We can reach out to others with our talents and strengths. *For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:10).*

PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, you know whose needs we can meet. Send those people our way and give us the help we need when we need it for our own troubles. *And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. (1. Corinthians 13:13).*

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DEVOTIONS TO BE USED DURING THE YEAR

The Scripture: Jeremiah 31:21

Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps: set thine heart toward the highway, even the way which thou wentest: turn again, O virgin of Israel, turn again to these thy cities.

This text in the book of Jeremiah talks about the return of the people of Israel to their native land. Israel here includes us, the followers of Jesus. There are many milestones on our path of life, memories that make us happy and sad. Often we have to work with these memories to be able to move forward. In White Ribbon work we often meet people who carry dark shadows with them. These shadows should be cast away so their lives can be rich and joyful.

How can an abused, violently broken heart and mind become whole again? Where can one find the arms, the touch that can heal us? When we have the courage to embark on the journey of growth, grow to become small and vulnerable, God's work of healing can begin in us and in others who are wounded. God has promised to heal us. The Lord has promised to *bind up the bruises of his people and heal the wounds he inflicted.* (Isaiah 30:26).

Our complete recovery will take place when we are with God in eternity, but such recovery has already begun. The Lord wants to heal us every day. We get to take our sorrows and our heaviest stories to Him and trust that He will take us in His care. As a community we will receive the faith to put our trust in God and in each other. We can better focus on what is essential when we leave our matters in greater hands in serenity instead of "what ifs" and "how on earths" when it is time to consent to God's will. It is easy to be content when everything goes as planned, but even when troubles weigh heavily on us, we must keep our vision and mission in mind.

We need milestones to stay on the straight and narrow road. May the Lord help us every day to fix our eyes on the marks that keep us on God's intended place and finally lead us to our heavenly home.

PRAYER:

You are great, Lord, and greatly to be praised. You have created us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.

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DEVOTIONS TO BE USED DURING THE YEAR

The Scripture: Psalm 145

Teach us to break the bread for all who live in poverty.

The Lord is trustworthy in all he promises and faithful in all he does. The Lord upholds all who fall and lifts up all who are bowed down. The eyes of all look to you, and you give them their food at the proper time. You open your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing.

In the Finnish capital, Helsinki, the Lutheran church within its social work program organizes so-called "sweet roll services". Finnish sweet rolls, known as *pulla*, are made of flour, sugar, eggs, butter, and milk. These services are especially targeted toward people with substance abuse problems, difficulties in life, the so-called "*men of the street*". Even when Finland, like other Scandinavian countries, has a high level of social security, we also have people who go hungry. No matter what the underlying reasons are, the final result is sad and often difficult to resolve.

The WWCTU World Congress presented the Resolution on fair trade. It proclaimed that the majority of the world's population lives in poverty and spends the majority of daytime looking for food. How is it that this rich and bountiful God-created world has been divided in such a way, and the gap seems to keep opening wider? Obviously there are many human factors that we can influence as well as factors that are out of our reach as ordinary people. In the Finnish White Ribbon Union, a female pastor of an Ethiopian church visited us in June and told us about her country, working conditions, and her work with women and children. Climate-related problems, such as a drought that lasts for several years, are the kind of disasters that require help from the international community, from all Christians.

How can we give bread to the ends of the earth and make God's good will happen in the entire world? One appropriate way is to support mission charities and organizations who for example provide seeds, soil, tools, and domestic animals to help mothers feed their families and earn some money. Relief for substance abuse problems in developing countries is also important. We know that in addition to a multitude of other issues, these problems threaten the well-being of many nations. The poor and hungry of this world need and ask for our obedience to God's will. We may not be needed everywhere, but we do need God every step of the way. Only then will His blessing be upon us.

Though I walk in the midst of trouble, you preserve my life. You stretch out your hand against the anger of my foes; with your right hand you save me. The Lord will vindicate me; your love, Lord, endures forever— do not abandon the works of your hands. (Psalm 138:7-8)

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PROGRAM for USE for WCTU WORLD DAY of PRAYER - September 28th

Program for children

Theme: The “I am” statements of Jesus

Jesus said:

I am the bread of life (John 6:35)

I am the light of the world (John 8:12)

I am the good shepherd (John 10:11)

I am the resurrection and the life (John 11:25)

I am the way and the truth and the life (John 14:6).

The children’s service is constructed around a “Path of light” which can be assembled outside or in a spacious room. Candles are placed at a visible distance one from another along the path. The candles can be fire safe LED candles. One of the “I am” statements is written on a card and placed by each candle. The children have the Bible with them to find the quote. The Path of light ends at an altar, either in the church or at a self-constructed altar table. The altar should contain a tablecloth, candle, the Bible and some flowers. The children are seated at the altar and the “I am” statements are read aloud. The older children can find them in the Bible and read them. After reading, each statement is discussed and reflected on what Jesus wants to tell us in the way he describes himself in the passage. It is best to find the main point and focus on it. The children’s age should also be considered. It is enough to be true to what the Bible proclaims.

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PROGRAM for USE for WCTU WORLD DAY of PRAYER - September 28th

Family service

THE GOOD FRUIT of the SPIRIT MAKES OUR FAMILIES STRONGER

{Heavy card is used to cut a large tree to attach to the wall. Fruit are cut out from different colored cards or paper and different fruit of the Spirit are written on the cut-outs. The fruit can be attached to the tree as the sermon proceeds. The sermon can be centered around the fruit of the spirit, which are made more concrete by illustrating how to apply Paul's text to everyday situations.}

The Bible often compares man to a fruit tree. It is easy to identify if the fruit of a tree is sweet or sour. If we are fruit trees, what kinds of fruit do we bear?

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Galatians 5:22

LOVE

It is respecting others.

JOY

It is not letting sadness overbear us.

PEACE

It is resting in God's promise to protect us.

FORBEARANCE

It is giving others and ourselves a second chance as often as needed.

KINDNESS

It is having a moment for someone if he asks for it.

GOODNESS

It is justice, taking sides with someone against injustice.

FAITHFULNESS

It is trusting. Breaking someone's trust hurts both the one breaking it and the one whose trust is broken.

GENTLENESS

It is building harmony.

SELF-CONTROL

It is self-discipline. Self-discipline is to be temperate in mind, soul and body.

Even Jesus is compared to a tree bearing fruit. The fruit given by Jesus is the best kind of fruit. Jesus showed us with his life and example what kind of fruit a good tree bears.

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ENCOURAGEMENT for DAILY PRAYER and BIBLE STUDY

Bible study based on Ecclesiastes 3:1-13, *There is a time for everything*

PRAYER: Our beloved Heavenly Father, you hold the time of our lives in your hands, along with its lights and shadows. Help us make the best use of our lives in your glory.

It is extremely difficult for us to change our habitual thought and action patterns. That's why it is elementary for us to create habits that protect and shelter our lives. A Finnish proverb says; Preserve a habit and the habit preserves you. In Psalm 73 a routine-breaking incident is described:

But as for me, my feet had almost slipped; I had nearly lost my foothold. For I envied the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. They are free from common human burdens; they are not plagued by human ills. Therefore pride is their necklace; they clothe themselves with violence. From their callous hearts comes iniquity; their evil imaginations have no limits. They scoff, and speak with malice; with arrogance they threaten oppression. Their mouths lay claim to heaven, and their tongues take possession of the earth. Therefore their people turn to them and drink up waters in abundance. They say, "How would God know? Does the Most High know anything?

This is what the wicked are like— always free of care, they go on amassing wealth. Surely in vain I have kept my heart pure and have washed my hands in innocence. All day long I have been afflicted, and every morning brings new punishments. If I had spoken out like that, I would have betrayed your children. When I tried to understand all this, it troubled me deeply till I entered the sanctuary of God; then I understood their final destiny.

Surely you place them on slippery ground; you cast them down to ruin. How suddenly are they destroyed, completely swept away by terrors! They are like a dream when one awakes; when you arise, Lord, you will despise them as fantasies. When my heart was grieved and my spirit embittered, I was senseless and ignorant; I was a brute beast before you. Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

Daily prayer and Bible study and discussion and communication with God build us on the inside. That makes us stronger when we face trials and feel abandoned by God. When we maintain a strong connection to God, we can go to Him with our doubts and He gives us hope. Even if God does not make our journeys smooth, He guides us and gives us the gift of trust. That gives us the strength in dark moments to understand I am not lost and abandoned. Even if my understanding of God has been

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ENCOURAGEMENT for DAILY PRAYER and BIBLE STUDY

shaken, I am not lost. Still I feel and know that God is my Savior. He stays by my side and follows my footsteps every step of the way.

There is a well-known negro spiritual we Finns know that says: *Hés got the whole world in his hands.* Another song, beloved by many, says: *We shall overcome some day. O, deep in my heart, I do believe, we shall overcome some day.*

Even at the edge of a ravine we can believe in the promises the Bible has given us - that God's hand will sustain us and His arm strengthen us. He leads us according to his counsel.