10 WAYS TO PROMOTE UNITED METHODIST STUDENT DAY
DEAR CHURCH LEADER,

United Methodist Student Day is one of six Special Sundays when churches receive an offering for a particular ministry through the denomination. On the last Sunday in November, gifts through this offering benefit students as they pursue opportunities in higher education.

United Methodist Student Day is a great time to lift up the students in your congregation. Let them know that you support them and that they are valued.

Your congregation’s contribution will be joined with other United Methodists to provide scholarships to deserving recipients.

THE OFFERING HAS RAISED MORE THAN $2 MILLION AND HELPS MORE THAN 300 STUDENTS A YEAR.

This e-book includes 10 strategies for preparing your congregation to celebrate United Methodist Student Day. We pray these ideas will help keep students connected with your church and spark a generous spirit in support of scholars.

Student Day was first celebrated in 1940 when a college education could be attained for $450 a year. Today, that same education costs an average of $23,000 each year.

Your congregation is invited to invest in young leaders by giving generously on United Methodist Student Day as part of the offering on the last Sunday in November.

PLEASE BE IN PRAYER WITH THE STUDENTS WHO ARE RECIPIENTS OF THE EDUCATION MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH THIS SPECIAL OFFERING. THANK YOU.
MANY STUDENTS RETURN TO THEIR HOMETOWN FOR THANKSGIVING. CREATE SPACE FOR THEM TO RECONNECT WITH THEIR CHURCH FRIENDS WHO ARE ALSO HOME.

Provide music, soft drinks and a home-cooked dinner prepared by the congregation.

While the important element is that students gather as a faith community, consider one of these activities depending on your church culture and in consultation with several students:

- karaoke
- open mic
- photo booth
- photo slideshow
- outdoor games (flag football, Frisbee, softball, etc.)
- indoor games (scavenger hunt, two truths and a lie, board games, etc.).

IF ONLY A FEW COLLEGE STUDENTS WILL BE IN TOWN, INVITE THEM OUT TO DINNER WITH THE YOUTH LEADER OR PASTOR.

If you have a small group of high school juniors and seniors, encourage them to host the reunion, set up activities, plan the event, etc. This will give them an opportunity to hear about college life from the older students.
Turkey Trot Fundraiser

Invite the youth group or others in the congregation to raise money for United Methodist Student Day. Either on Thanksgiving morning or sometime during Thanksgiving weekend, organize a community “turkey trot” 5K fun run/walk.

1. CHARGE A REGISTRATION FEE with proceeds supporting the United Methodist Student Day offering that provides scholarships and low-interest loans to qualified students.
2. PROVIDE BOTTLES OF WATER that include your church’s information.
3. MAP OUT A ROUTE that preferably starts at your church. Make sure to contact the local government if you need to block off any streets.
4. CELEBRATE EACH PERSON who crosses the finish line.
5. PUBLICIZE HOW MUCH WAS RAISED and present it as part of the United Methodist Student Day offering.
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Intergenerational Video

Organize students to interview senior members of the congregation.

Ask questions about their education and experiences in school. How did their faith community support them as students?

Then turn the interview around. Invite older congregants to ask the students about their experiences in school and how the church has prepared them for college.

Make a video of the conversations between different generations of members.

It is helpful to have someone who is not part of the conversation record the video. A smart phone video camera is adequate for this project. Some phones have a feature that will automatically create a short video that splices together parts of the different interviews. If there is a technologically savvy person in your church or community, ask her or him for help in creating a compelling and moving video that can be shown on United Methodist Student Day.
HELP STUDENTS WHO HAVE GONE AWAY TO COLLEGE STAY CONNECTED WITH THE CONGREGATION.

Create a schedule of students to call through video conference as part of a small-group gathering, prayer circle, or an informal meeting following a worship service. Ask the student about college life. Let the student know he or she is loved and missed. End the call with a prayer.
Intergenerational Worship

BE SURE TO INCORPORATE STUDENTS INTO WORSHIP ON UNITED METHODIST STUDENT DAY.

Invite them to serve as greeters, ushers, acolytes, readers and musicians. If worship will include an offering talk about United Methodist Student Day, ask a college student to present it.
If your church already has a book group, encourage group members to choose a book that focuses on education for the month of November.

Or consider starting a new book group that has an educational theme. We have developed a curated reading list here.
COLLECT DONATIONS OF CARE PACKAGE ITEMS FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS FROM YOUR CONGREGATION.

Assemble care packages and ship to college students so that the gifts arrive during preparations for final exams. Items could include:

- individual sized snacks
- hot chocolate packets
- granola bars
- stress ball
- water bottle
- candy/gum
- gift card to coffee shop or pizza delivery service
- postcard with a photo of your town or church
- fuzzy socks
- scented oil diffuser
- lip balm
- book of devotions
- journal
- encouraging card
Before students leave for college, ask them to fill in the blank on a sign that says, “What I will miss about (congregation name) is ________________” or “Please hold me in prayer while I am at ________________ (name of college).”

TAKE A PHOTO OF HIM OR HER HOLDING THE SIGN. Post the photos in the church with a reminder to hold the students in prayer.
ASSIGN EACH SMALL GROUP IN THE CHURCH TO CARE FOR A STUDENT WHO IS AWAY AT COLLEGE. The group commits to praying for the student and each month sends a card with an encouraging message.

ON HIS OR HER BIRTHDAY, SEND A BIRTHDAY CARD. Check in with the student occasionally and ask for any prayer requests.
As part of your church’s preparation for United Methodist Student Day, host a college application review day.

ASK MEMBERS WHO ARE EDUCATORS TO VOLUNTEER TO ASSIST STUDENTS BY READING APPLICATIONS AND ESSAYS AND PROVIDING FEEDBACK.

Don’t forget to include information about how students can apply for a Gift of Hope Scholarship.
For more information and resources on United Methodist Student Day, visit

umcgiving.org/UMSD