

Animation Support Available!

Living Faithfully in the Midst of Empire

Book the “empire animator” for Conferences, presbyteries, and groups of congregations seeking to animate what it means to live faithfully in the midst of empire.



Challenging Empire
A CALL TO COMMUNITY
The United Church of Canada • L'Église Unie du Canada

Workshops—standalone or within larger gatherings—will be tailored to fit your group. We will

- explore what we mean by “empire” and how it relates to our faith
- ground workshops in *your* reality with relevant themes that connect to your group and to global partners (e.g., climate change, consumerism, farming crisis, job loss)
- combine reflection, discussion, and experiential learning
- lift up life-giving, hope-filled alternatives in the midst of empire
- get creative with ideas and resources to take back to your communities

What does empire have to do with me and the church anyway? Empire can be found in issues we think about every day:

- *Are we only worth what we buy?*
- *Why are we constantly in the midst of a farming crisis?*
- *Why was the Haitian earthquake such a large-scale disaster?*
- *Why are small towns being drained of people?*
- *Are Facebook and Twitter more than just fun distractions?*
- *Are we stuck with life choices that can only harm, not heal?*
- *Is there any hope of making a difference in the world? How can our faith help?*

Some Workshop Themes

1. Living for the Earth: Choosing Creation Over Empire

This workshop is based on the current United Church mission theme. It explores how the ecological crisis hits home by making links between political-economic systems and the farm crisis, climate change, and the impacts of resource-driven economies. Participants will become more familiar with how Southern partners are prioritizing creation through an exploration of hopeful alternatives, and will explore concrete actions they can take to choose creation over empire right here at home.

2. Exploring the Roots of Disaster in Haiti: Finding Hope in the Future!

United Church members responded generously when the earthquake hit Haiti, and Haitians are working tirelessly to rebuild their country. As funds are directed toward crucial relief, rehabilitation, and reconstruction, this workshop looks behind the devastation to examine the structural and historical roots of disaster. Through partners, we will explore ways to complement generosity with political action so that the Haitian recovery is authentic, democratic, and led by the people.

3. YouTube, Facebook, & Street Theatre: Tools for Resistance & Transformation

This session explores the rise of social media, street theatre, video blogging, and more! Wildly democratic and with the potential to reach millions in minutes, social media provide countless opportunities to challenge unjust economic and political systems. Facebook now boasts the third-largest “population” after China and India, YouTube is the world’s second-largest search engine, and Flash Mobs and Twit-Ins are the next hot things! Each session is unique: learn a little about a lot or focus on a specific tool.



4. So Many Choices, So Few Choices: Empire’s Grip on What We Eat

Food is central to our faith: it helps us connect as community, it nourishes us both physically and spiritually, and it puts us into relationship with everything. This workshop explores where our food comes from, how food systems work, and who’s in charge and why. Living out alternatives can be challenging but incredibly inspiring as well. Drawing on global partners’ experiences and local examples, we will explore ways to take concrete steps toward healthy, sustainable, life-giving food systems.

5. Today’s Money-Lenders: Cracks in the Foundation

Plummeting mutual funds, job loss, and high personal debt loads are just some of the impacts of the economic crisis. Empire, a term used to describe social and economic relations in Jesus’ time, is even more relevant today. This session draws parallels between Jesus’ teachings with today’s global economic crisis. What are the lessons to be learned? What is our alternative vision? Moving from discussion to action, participants will explore what’s needed to build an economy in the grace of God.

6. Spirituality as Resistance

When we begin to explore our spirituality, we become aware of our interconnectedness to earth, creation, and each other. Spirituality helps us personally connect to a sense of the Divine through exploration, meditation, wisdom, solidarity, and compassion. Explore how that connection can lead to a commitment to resist those things that destroy life and commit us to a socially engaged spirituality.

7. Are We Only Worth What We Buy? The Empire of Consumerism

In today’s consumer culture, everything is a commodity. We’re judged by what we own, and everything is up for sale—even water, public services, and the air we breathe. Our choices are often based on greed, not need. Workshop participants will explore our role as consumers, the power we hold, and how to make choices that shape a world we want to live in. We will look at ways to redirect life stewardship away from a competition for individual gain to a holistic caring for God’s earth, grounded in “A Covenant for Life in Creation.”

8. What Is Empire & Why Does It Matter: Mapping Empire in Our Midst

An introduction to the United Church’s engagement on the theme of Living Faithfully in the Midst of Empire, mandated by General Council in 2006. How does this engagement relate to the ways we choose to live out our faith? How can unjust ways of relating manifest anywhere: between countries, in government, in our community, or even inside our church and families? Participants will explore hopeful alternatives and vision based on our Christian tradition and through our global partnerships.

Empire is

- *a system of domination separating us from ourselves and our place in creation*
- *a metaphor for understanding the unjust use of power*
- *a network of powerful economic interests that permeate many aspects of our lives*
- *a lens that reveals relationships producing inequality and environmental destruction*
- *a way of connecting the gospel to our present-day experience*



For more information please contact:

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