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Ubuntu! How about greeting the person sitting next to by saying “Ubuntu”?

Well, wait a minute, you may be thinking, *what’s the word mean?* Simply put, it means, “I am because you are,” or as Desmond Tutu explained this African word, “One of the sayings in our country is Ubuntu—the essence of being human. Ubuntu speaks particularly about the fact that you can’t exist as a human being in isolation. It speaks about our interconnectedness. You can’t be human all by yourself, and when you have this quality—Ubuntu—you are known for your generosity. We think of ourselves far too frequently as just individuals, separated from one another, whereas you are connected and what you do affects the whole world.”¹

Have you ever thought of what you do as affecting the whole world? Most times I imagine we may think of those nearby—but the whole world? Really? Instead we may wonder, *How does what we do make a difference?*

This morning I invite you to imagine you are visiting an art gallery filled with pictures of people who have made a difference. As we enter the gallery, we find a collection of portraits of Ruth from the biblical story about this woman; her husband died, and so she traveled with her mother-in-law to find a place to live. Ruth found a way for them to survive by collecting grain from the field of Boaz. Eventually Ruth and Boaz marry and have a son, whose descendants include the great King David, which many generations later led to the birth of Jesus.

Little did Ruth know that as she won the heart of Boaz and had a son that she would make a difference to the world. Her story reminds us that even through our families, we make a difference!

As we travel to the next room in the art gallery we find a collection of pictures about the woman in Mark’s story who placed a single coin into the collection box at the temple. Little did she know that in doing so Jesus would recognize her as giving more than all those others who had brought large

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offerings that day. Her story continues to echo throughout history as an example that one person can make a difference. No matter what amount we can contribute, we make a difference!

Did you know that you and I are also connected to “over 270 partner churches and organizations in about 70 countries around the world”² through our Global Ministries? We Disciples of Christ sponsor missionaries around the world along with our mission partner The United Church of Christ. Our next gallery display offers one illustration of how we work together with a school for Palestinian children in East Jerusalem. Here they developed a Character Tree, which displays the values central to their lives, such as “love, forgiveness, justice, peace and hope, honesty, cooperation, patience, commitment, reconciliation,” and more!³

Our bulletin insert explains how one young boy in this school practiced forgiveness toward those classmates who had committed a serious offense against him, prompting others in the class to recognize how wrong they had been. His story

reminds us that when offering forgiveness to someone, we make a difference!

Having an education is so important in today’s world, and our next gallery displays photos of teenage Malala from Pakistan who has been advocating for the rights of girls to attend school; those opposed to this idea shot her in the head last month. She was rushed to the hospital, where she had surgery and continues to recuperate. But through her brave words the entire globe has become more aware of the 32 million girls around the world who do not attend school, with 11/10/12 being proclaimed by the United Nations as “Malala Day.”⁴

She has also been flooded with thousands letters and messages, including one from a 6-year-old who wrote, “I have heard about you being hurt by baddies. I think you are very brave and I am sad that you are not allowed to go to school and I don’t think it’s fair. I think girls should go to school because otherwise they

would be stupid and would not know anything and it's fun to learn things.”

Wrote another: “You have inspired me to have fun and do well at school because, like you said, not all girls get to go to school. I hope your dreams come true.”⁵

In getting an education and advocating for the right for everyone to have an education, we make a difference!

And finally, the last room of the gallery takes us to St. Louis, where youth at Union Avenue Christian Church have been creating displays of how they envision the body of Christ. They had been studying Paul's letter to the church in Corinth, where he used the imagery of the many parts of the body working together. By placing photos of people in the shape

of a body, they illustrated Ubuntu, how we are all interconnected. In the second photo they have creatively shaped loaves of bread into a human figure, reminding us that we are all part of the body of Christ, for all are welcome to share bread together; everyone is a member of God's family.

And now our Crossroads Players celebrate that we are all part of the body of Christ, from those gathered here in this place to our Global Ministry Partners around the globe.

“That's Some Body: a dramatic reading of 1 Corinthians 12:12-27” by Jeffrey C. Smith.

We make a difference—you and me all those connected to us around the world! Ubuntu!

¹ <http://globalministries.org/resources/special-days/gm-sunday/>
² <http://globalministries.org/about-us/>
³ <http://rawdat.org/moralvalues.html> and <http://globalministries.org/bulletin/en/november-2012.html>
⁴ <http://www.ndtv.com/article/world/ban-ki-moon-voices-support-for-malala-yousafzai-as-world-names-november-10-after-her-290908>

⁵ Isolde Raftery, “Malala receives thousands of supportive messages from around the world,” http://worldnews.nbcnews.com/_news/2012/11/08/15035417-malala-receives-thousands-of-supportive-messages-from-around-world?lite