

Minutes for Mission 2014

*...what does the Lord require of you
but to **do justice**,
and to **love kindness**,
and to **walk humbly with your God?***

Micah 6:8



GOD'S MISSION
OUR GIFTS

The Mission and Service of
The United Church of Canada





Copyright © 2013
The United Church of Canada
L'Église Unie du Canada
3250 Bloor St. West, Suite 300
Toronto, ON M8X 2Y4 CANADA



Minutes for Mission is published every year as a resource for the people of The United Church of Canada to connect with the work that their gifts for Mission and Service enable.

Minutes for Mission is available online on www.UCRDstore.ca; search for “minutes for mission 2014.” Extra copies of this booklet as well as the companion DVD may be ordered while supplies last.

Phone UCRD: 1-800-288-7365 or 416-253-5456
www.UCRDstore.ca

CH10902 (Booklet)
CH10903 (DVD)

Heartfelt thanks go to every person supporting Mission and Service ministry and programs. Your generous gifts and good work are great acts of compassion, community, and hope. Thank you to each of the writers for the weekly Minute for Mission—your stories connect us all with God’s mission. A special thank you to Cathy Hird for creating the liturgy, skit, and children’s conversation so that we have many ways to keep Mission and Service at the heart of our church.

We welcome your comments and stories for the next edition of *Minutes for Mission*!

E-mail: ms@united-church.ca
www.united-church.ca



This document is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd) Licence. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.5/ca>. Any copy must include this notice.

Compiled by Cheryl Curtis
Design and layout: Diane Renault-Collicott
Cover image: Glenys Verhulst and Megan Crosby

Contents

Message from the Editor2
Our Stewardship Prayer.....3
Mission and Service at a Glance4
Weekly Minutes for Mission.....6
Advent Candle-Lighting Liturgy53
Making the Mission and Service Connection: A Skit.....60
Seeing a New Way: M&S Children’s Conversation62

Legend/Index



Global Mission and Service 7, 8, 10, 13, 15, 19, 20, 24, 26, 27, 29, 34, 37, 38, 40, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 48, 49, 50, 55, 56, 59



Canadian Community and Justice Work 6, 9, 12, 16, 18, 21, 22, 31, 33, 36, 47, 52



Theological Education and Ministry Support 23



Faith Formation 11, 19, 22, 25, 28, 32, 39, 41, 51, 57



Support to Local Ministries 17, 30, 35, 58



Conference Leadership 14, 25, 39, 51

Stories with companion videos 15, 17, 21, 22, 23, 25, 26, 28, 31, 43, 47 View at www.youtube.com/unitedchurchofcanada, or download from www.UCRDstore.ca—search for “minutes for mission 2014.”

▶ Companion video available

Minutes in French (online only)

Comptes rendus en français (en ligne seulement)

6, 7, 11, 15, 17, 18, 21, 25, 28, 30, 33, 38, 43, 45, 50, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59
Visitez le site www.UCRDstore.ca et recherchez “minutes for mission 2014.”

Disponible en français!



Message from the Editor

The words of Micah 6:8 are instructions for living a faithful life. As these instructions accompany us through this year of Mission and Service stories, let us remember that the call to *do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God* is an invitation into relationship with God and all God's people.


God's mission is wide and deep. The people of The United Church of Canada are compassionate and engage in God's mission with our local congregations and communities as well as through Mission and Service, the church's unified fund. Your gifts for Mission and Service make healing, growth, and hope possible. Each of these Minutes for Mission is a story from a ministry supported by your gifts for Mission and Service. Each Minute is an invitation to pause and take a moment to connect with God's mission.

I pray that these story moments will smooth the way for your lively acts of justice and kindness and your daily walk with God.

We pray in thanksgiving:

Mighty and tender God,
our gifts to M&S help your church to
do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.

Blessings,



Cheryl Curtis
Mission and Service Funding Officer



Our Stewardship Prayer

One: What does the Lord require of us but to

Women: do justice,

Men: and to love kindness,

All: and to walk humbly with our God?

One: Mighty and tender God,

All: Creator and giver of life and all things,

We give our thanks and praise.

One: We are especially thankful for *(add your own)* ...

One: Mighty and tender God,

All: We ask your blessing upon our work and ministry, our response to your call to be the Church:

to celebrate God's presence

to live with respect in Creation

to love and serve others,

to do justice and resist evil,

to proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen,

our judge and our hope.

One: Mighty and tender God,

All: Hear us as we pray

One: For the church throughout the world in its life and ministries;

(Add your own)...

For the nations and peoples of the world as they strive for peace and justice;

(Add your own)...

For all who suffer: people who are sick, grieving, lonely, oppressed;

(Add your own)...

For peaceful relations among friends, colleagues, family, and strangers.

(Add your own)...

One: Mighty and tender God,

All: In your loving purpose help us to use and share the gifts you have given us to contribute to your mission.

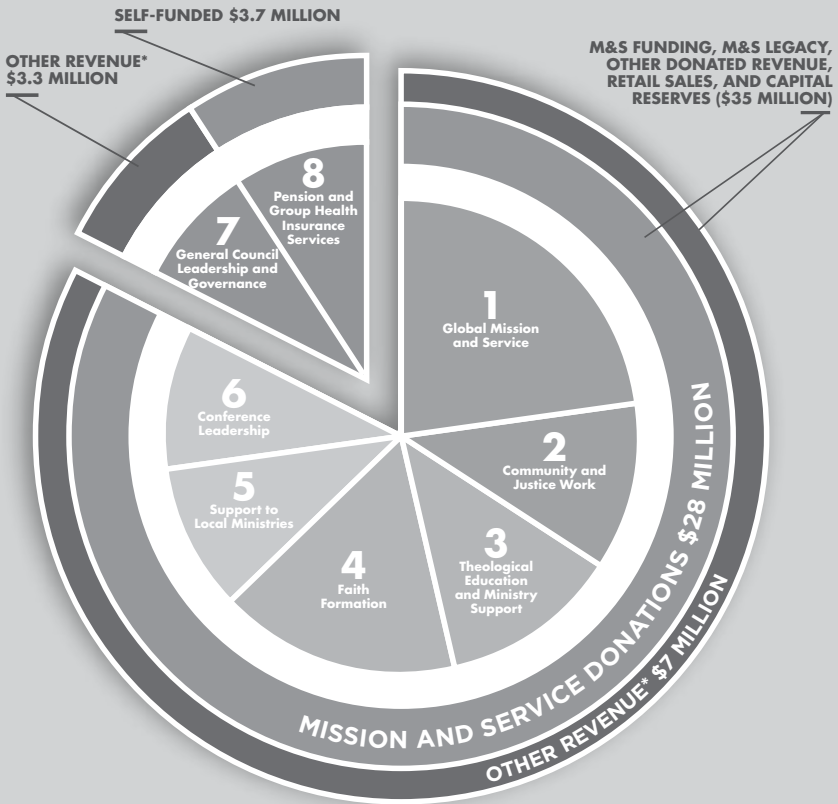
In all things give us the grace and wisdom to accept your will.

In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen, Alleluia!



Mission and Service at a Glance

FORECASTED 2013 MISSION AND SERVICE REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES (\$35 MILLION)



The inner pie chart shows where the money is spent.
The outer rings show where the funding for this work comes from.

*Other Revenue includes designated gifts from Gifts with Vision and other sources, additional donated funds, investment income, government co-financing, and retail sales. It also includes a draw on capital reserves to meet expenditure commitments in years where this is necessary.



1 Global Mission and Service:
22.9% of M&S funds



Peace and justice work undertaken in cooperation with a range of global partners in the regions of Africa and the Middle East, Asia, and the Caribbean and Latin America

2 Community and Justice Work:
14% of M&S funds



Supporting community and justice ministries, engaging marginalized communities, and seeking right relationships across Canada; includes the caring work of hospital and university chaplains, the Aboriginal Healing Fund, programs related to Indigenous justice and right relations, and support for Canadian ecumenical partners

3 Theological Education
and Ministry Support:
15.7% of M&S funds



Funding for theological schools, training for lay leadership, educating ordained and diaconal clergy, providing student education bursaries, and providing ongoing support to ministers and congregations

4 Faith Formation:
21.4% of M&S funds



Ministries with children, youth and young adults, Aboriginal peoples, and French communities, as well as stewardship, and intercultural and diverse ministries

5 Support to Local Ministries:
13.1% of M&S funds



Supplying core operational funding to congregations where required, providing grants and capital funding, and sharing resources and expertise with local ministries and networks to address important issues

6 Conference Leadership:
12.9% of M&S funds



Funding to support Conference staff as they provide leadership and resources to presbyteries, ministry personnel, and local ministries

FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE WORK OF MISSION AND SERVICE, SEE

Mission and Service at a Glance:

www.united-church.ca/getinvolved/support/program

Partners in Mission:

www.united-church.ca/partners





Fleeing Home

This year the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is asking, “Imagine your family had just one minute to flee your home. What one thing would you take with you?” Many refugees from all over the world have had their pictures taken showing their item (you can see them on [pinterest.com/refugees/the-most-important-thing](https://www.pinterest.com/refugees/the-most-important-thing/)). The items range from pots to motorcycles, and all have special meaning to those who chose to flee with them.

When Fatima (not her real name) arrived in our Anglican United Refugee Alliance office a few months ago, it was because she had immediate medical needs that required a doctor’s attention. While waiting at the walk-in clinic I asked her about the backpack she had been so careful to keep in sight at all times. Fatima shyly told me that she had arrived in Canada with only one change of clothes, which, along with the few documents that proved her identity and status in Canada, were in the backpack. It contained all of her worldly possessions.

Every four seconds a person just like Fatima is forced to flee their home to try to find safety and begin a new life. Fatima is one of the lucky few who have been brought to Canada, but there are still over 15 million refugees and more than 42 million displaced people in the world right now.

The Anglican United Refugee Alliance works with churches in Toronto Conference to make sure people like Fatima are able to begin their lives again in safety and dignity.

Your gifts for Mission and Service support this refugee ministry. Please give generously.

Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.



Disponible en
français!

Protecting Safe Water Sources



The National Moravian Women's Union brings together women from the five regions of long-time Mission and Service partner the Moravian Church of Nicaragua. A vital part of the church's identity is commitment to service in communities. The women of the union work together to oppose domestic violence. They organize to equip women with skills like sewing, cooking, and jewellery-making so they can improve their livelihoods and those of their families. From generation to generation, these leaders have noticed improvements in the quality of life for Nicaraguan women: more women can read, and younger women are stronger and less inclined to be silent.

In the Rio Coco region, safe water supply is a critical issue. Water quality in the Rio Coco is affected by mining activities upstream and by waste from other communities. Local water springs provide communities with an alternative water source, but these sources need to be protected from contamination. The Women's Union is training women to protect the springs by planting trees nearby, fencing around the springs where needed, improving water channels, cleaning the areas regularly, and continuously monitoring these important water sources.

The Women's Union is expanding this work into the Rio Coco communities of Asang and Krasa. In a shared effort, the community provides some basic materials and labour, while the Women's Union provides fencing material, training, and expertise.

With the support of Mission and Service, the women of the National Moravian Women's Union are helping remote communities to protect local water resources.

*Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to
do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.*





Justice and Peace for All

The Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit, General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, spoke to a United Nations gathering about the role of religion in the work for peace and justice:

We can only speak about justice and peace for humanity, I believe, by speaking about our relationships to one another as human beings.

Justice and peace cannot be limited to one group, one people, or all those of one belief. The work for justice and peace must be the agenda for all of us. Faithfulness to God and traditional values must be tested by asking the questions we cannot escape: are we serving all people, and their need for justice and peace, whatever race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, generation, or gender they are?

We are committed to working with all people of faith, and all people of good will, to find how we as churches can be accountable to God's call to let justice and peace prevail.

This vision requires that we be never content with ourselves, but always go beyond ourselves reaching out to other actors in civil society and especially to other religions.

God does not need religion. We as humanity can, however, be well served by religious traditions if they inspire us to honour God by striving for justice and peace for all of humanity and the whole creation.

Your generous gifts for Mission and Service enable the United Church to participate in the fellowship of the World Council of Churches in this Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and throughout the year.

Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.



A House *Can* Be a Home



Carew Lodge and New Beginnings are programs of Stella's Circle (Stella Burry Community Services) in St. John's, Newfoundland.

Home is not where you live but where they understand you.

Christian Morgenstern

In 2008, Corey was released from prison having served time for drug trafficking. He came to Stella's Circle confused, hurt, and angry. While in prison, he had been badly beaten and suffered a stroke that left him with physical impairments.

As a condition of his parole, Corey lived at Carew Lodge in a secured unit for parolees. The transition proved difficult for Corey, but the Stella's Circle team never gave up on him. Eventually, he moved into one of the regular apartments as a tenant, and shortly after he was offered the position of building superintendent.

For the first time Corey felt trusted by others, motivating him to make positive changes in his life. He became known for his reliability, thoughtfulness, and ability to respond professionally to job challenges.

In 2011, Corey began thinking more about his future. He participated in the New Beginnings Employment Program. The following year, having gained confidence in his employability, he was accepted into Stella's Social Enterprise Training Program, where he received training in building maintenance and janitorial services.

Now a graduate of the program, Corey is working full-time and is engaged to be married. At his graduation, smiling from ear to ear, he thanked Stella's Circle for believing in him and giving him the chance to succeed. Staff were quick to remind him that they provided the door, but *he* walked through it—to a better life.

*Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to
do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.*





Funding an Education

The Christian Council of Tanzania, through the Chaplaincy Office of the University of Dodoma, is helping students break the cycle of poverty.

Many Tanzanian students face delays in receiving approved loans from the National Loan Board that are notoriously ill-timed in terms of student needs at the start of the school year. A large proportion of students at the University of Dodoma come from the poorest parts of Tanzania. Unable to obtain their loans in time to pay for registration, these students can miss many weeks of classes, compromising their academic future. Cash flow problems also prevent them from securing accommodation, buying textbooks and other materials, and feeding themselves.

The council has established a revolving fund that advances money to these students so they can begin classes on time. Loans are repaid once the National Loan Board releases funds.

To supplement the loan program, the council has also established a series of financial workshops that all applicants must attend before receiving funds. Many students have little or no experience in managing money and need help to take control of their personal finances. This is a life skill for students that will serve them well at school and beyond.

United Church overseas personnel the Rev. Tiina Cote, who works with the Christian Council of Tanzania chaplaincy program, says, “We are already seeing significant changes in spending behaviours and setting goals, even if the sums are very low.”

Mission and Service is helping to build a strong future with Tanzanian students at the University of Dodoma.

Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.



Disponible en
français!

Community Connections



It's noon on a damp, wintry Wednesday in the fellowship hall at Trinity United Church in suburban Port Coquitlam, British Columbia. Food is piled on tables, and the heady smell of fresh soup pours from the kitchen. Volunteers smile as people crowd in. Each week, Trinity is the depot for the community food bank, serving 300 families.

The congregation feels they “have a responsibility to share with people who don't have what we do,” says member Joy Galea. Back in the 1980s, it severed some of its land so a 31-unit subsidized housing project could be built on the site. Recently, its UCW contributed \$7,000 to the district school breakfast program, helping the school district provide 525 meals to hungry children each week. Trinity has also participated in the Extreme Weather Mat Program, giving homeless people a place to sleep in the harshest days of winter.

Trinity's compassion feeds its dedication to fulfill and often exceed its Mission and Service commitment. “At Trinity, people look at the needs they see in their home place and then look farther away to help,” says Galea. The 180-member church does this with the assistance of its thrift shop, entirely staffed by volunteers. Last year the shop raised \$50,000, of which \$13,000 went to M&S (the congregation gave a total of \$27,500).

“Jesus said that ‘as you did it to one of the least of these, you did it to me,’” says Joy. That spirit guides Trinity as it continues to reach out to marginalized people in its community.

Please give generously for Mission and Service. Together we are helping people and changing lives

*Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to
do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.*





24/7 Mobile Assistance Program (MAP)

The mission of Bissell Centre in Edmonton, Alberta, is to empower people to move from poverty to prosperity.

“What do 148 crisis interventions, 50 phone contacts, 98 street contacts, and 3 people housed equal?” asked Gary St. Amand, Bissell Centre’s Chief Programs Officer, when presenting at Bissell Centre’s annual meeting. “They equal seven weeks of work for Bissell Centre’s new 24/7 Mobile Assistance Program.”

Bissell Centre is proud to be providing this outreach service for Edmonton’s at-risk population. The 24/7 MAP team provides intervention, assessment, and advocacy services to Edmonton’s most vulnerable citizens around the clock. Taking over from emergency services when appropriate, 24/7 MAP accesses community and government-based supports, decreasing the dependence on crisis and emergency services.

At the official launch, Sherry told of being assaulted while she was sleeping in a doorway one night. The MAP team was driving in the area and saw the assault. “I had never heard of 24/7 MAP, but they pulled up and helped me,” she said as tears filled her eyes. After accompanying Sherry to the hospital, the MAP team assessed her situation and provided supports through Bissell Centre. With some follow-up, Sherry is now getting her own apartment.

So what all of those crisis interventions, phone contacts, street contacts, and people housed really equal is hope: hope for a safe place to rest at night, hope for a family to be restored, hope of escaping the trap of poverty, and hope for a different future. That is what it means to eliminate poverty in the community.

Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.





Advocating to End Abuse in India

Mission and Service partner Human Rights Advocacy and Research Foundation helped organize a public hearing on child rights in India. A panel of high-ranking Indian officials heard testimony from children and their families documenting horrific stories of abuse and exploitation. Many cases had been ignored or mishandled by authorities. The panel documented instances of abuse and proposed changes to laws and practices that allow abuse to continue. Testimonies were graphic and disturbing.

We hold in our prayers all children who have been abused and exploited. In particular, we hold in our prayers Sandiya, a 13-year-old Dalit girl who was abused and badly injured; Lakshmi, who was threatened with further violence if she reported that she'd been kidnapped and brutally beaten; and Srinivasan, an 18-year-old who committed suicide after ongoing verbal and physical abuse by teachers in his school.

The hearings and the panel's recommendations received wide media coverage. The recommendations provide a strong base for ongoing advocacy work in India. They have helped victims' families, survivors, and civil society organizations to pursue justice.

Mission and Service is in India supporting children and families to find justice and end abuse.

*Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to
do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.*





Facing the Past

The mandate of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada is to learn the truth about what happened in the Indian Residential Schools and to help guide First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples and Canadians toward reconciliation and renewed relationships based on mutual understanding and respect. Saskatchewan Conference's Justice and Right Relations Network works toward overcoming the separation between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples and deepening relationships among all nations in Saskatchewan.

Leta and Doreen hadn't given the Truth and Reconciliation Commission much thought. Leta raises two grandchildren and cares for two ill relatives. Doreen raises four grandchildren. Long-time friends who live on the same Regina street, the women manage full lives on small incomes.

Leta and Doreen lived through the Indian Residential Schools and the intergenerational fall-out from those times. But like many resilient First Nations women, they set their school experiences aside to face the demands of life. When they learned that Saskatchewan Conference's Justice and Right Relations Network was helping families attend the National Truth and Reconciliation Event in Saskatoon, they seized the opportunity.

Through volunteers, friends, and Mission and Service money, the network set up billets, picnic lunches, and transportation for families to attend the Truth and Reconciliation Event.

One year later, the women still talk about their weekend and express gratitude for United Church support. We receive their thanks with ambivalence, knowing we helped construct the system of Indian Residential Schools.

Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.



Disponible en
français!

▶ Companion
video
available

Hope at the Centre



Just beyond the stunning Spanish colonial architecture of Chiclayo, Peru, is a different reality. Each year thousands of people move into the city looking for a better life. Instead, they find themselves living in tightly packed neighbourhoods with little access to education, clean water, employment, and sanitation.

It's here that Sarah Beer works with United Church partner Centro Esperanza (Hope Centre), doing anything from basic office work to supporting people as they mobilize for change.

“I find it hard to talk about the work briefly because it is so complex,” Sarah says. “Centro Esperanza works in social development with people, mainly women, promoting quality education and gender equality, and engaging people so they can ask for changes themselves.

“It starts with people taking ownership. Projects start with them. Some women want to learn how to be good parents. They want their children to have opportunities; they see their children as their hope and for the healthy development of their communities and their futures.”

At the end of the day, when Sarah's back in her small apartment, she finds herself thinking about 1 Corinthians 12:12, where Paul writes that Christians are all part of one body.

“Mission and Service is so important. This work wouldn't exist without it and the presence of the United Church, and the relationship is a huge source of solidarity.”

Your donations to M&S mean that people in the poor neighbourhoods of Chiclayo can improve their lives and their communities. Thank you, and please continue to give.

*Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to
do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.*





In the Arms of the Faith Community

The Rev. Val Cottrill is a United Church hospital chaplain with the South Saskatchewan Hospital Chaplaincy.

I find her propped up in her hospital bed between two pillows in the orthopedics unit of the Regina General Hospital. She is wrapped in a hospital gown that hangs loosely over her small body. As is the fate of many women in their later years, Margaret fell and fractured her pelvis. She was brought to the hospital because the small rural centre that is her home does not have the medical facilities to attend to her.

At the age of 92, almost all of Margaret's friends have either died or are themselves frail and incapacitated. Her companion of more than 60 years passed away three years ago. Margaret is now lying in pain, alone and a long way from the faith community that nurtures her.

I listen to Margaret and ask her if she would like me to say a prayer with her. With her permission, I will call her home church and let the folks there know how she is doing.

I visit people like Margaret every day. The chaplain and spiritual care volunteers serve as reminders to the patients and families who are in crisis that they are held in the arms and prayers of their faith community. We can be a port in a storm, a quiet reassurance that they are not alone.

Your support of Mission and Service enables the South Saskatchewan Hospital Chaplaincy and others like it to carry out this important ministry on behalf of all of us. Thank you for making this happen, and please continue to give generously.

Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.



Disponible en
français!

▶ Companion
video
available

Sharing and Healing on the Grand River



“What does the Lord require of you?” The old prophet Micah may have uttered these words over 2,750 years ago, but they still ring a chord in our hearts today. “To do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God” could mean sharing and healing together.

A group of First Nations folk from the New Credit-Delaware Pastoral Charge in Hamilton Conference, Ontario, along with some folk from Grand River United Church of the Great Lakes Waterways Presbytery in All Native Circle Conference, have come together to determine whether sharing and healing together is what Micah may have meant by his words.

We have formed Nations Uniting—a place to share in the pursuit of peace and the common good for all people within the bounds of Six Nations and New Credit reserves and with all of our neighbours in the Grand River Valley. We meet twice a month or more at various locations up and down the Grand River.

Our Healing Circles and Grandmothers’ Teas are times of quiet sharing together, with each person in the circle getting a chance to talk or ask questions, and most importantly, respectfully listen to others’ stories. The healing that we proclaim happens as we listen and learn from one another. We also use KAIROS Canada’s Blanket Exercise to bring the teachings and reflections of forgotten Canadian history to life (you can find out more about it at www.kairosCanada.org/dignity-rights/indigenous-rights/the-blanket-exercise).

Nations Uniting has been meeting for the last two years. The number of gatherings is increasing as other churches hear about what we are doing and yearn to know more about their First Nations neighbours. This is one way to walk together in the footsteps of Micah. Thank you, and please give generously.

*Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to
do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.*





Open-Door Policy

It's one of those windy, cold nights Halifax is famous for. Fifteen people are curled up in warm beds inside historic St. Matthew's United. Each winter, the over-200-year-old church provides safe accommodation to men, women, transgendered people, couples, youth, and people with pets.

Known as the Out of the Cold Emergency Winter Shelter, it operates with assistance from Mission and Service and is staffed by 140 trained volunteers and 7 paid workers.

Out of the Cold differs from conventional shelters because the only barrier to admission is that a person cannot pose a risk to the safety of others or themselves. Intoxication doesn't prevent anyone from sleeping at the shelter; neither does unconventional behaviour (often caused by mental illness). At Out of the Cold, they believe that spending the night without shelter can be risky. Sub-zero temperatures and abuse on the street can put the lives of homeless people at risk.

Another service provided by the shelter is guidance on housing and health issues. But whether or not guests accept their advice, Out of the Cold accepts people "where they are at." "I never felt out of place here like at other shelters," says one guest. Perhaps even more important is the comment "It's been a good winter because of you guys."

In a city where shelters provide beds for 2,000 people each year, Out of the Cold Emergency Winter Shelter is one more haven for those who lack a home. Your gifts for Mission and Service make this possible. Please give generously.

Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.



The Power of One



It started with a handful of people gathered around a dining-room table in Brampton, Ontario. The Power of One group from North Bramalea United Church had a big goal—to reach beyond their city to make a difference in the world.

The group chose Église du Christ au Congo to partner with through the United Church's Extra Measures program because it knew of the 40-year M&S partnership between our churches.

Thanks to the group's efforts, on Good Friday in 2012 North Bramalea hosted two visitors, Sabine and Josué, from the Congolese church. Their stories of the violence and conflict in their country spurred The Power of One group to work harder in Canada to bring change to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The result was a special Sunday service in June 2013 to raise awareness about issues in that African country. People signed 500 letters to the federal government asking it to take action to stop the violence and displacement of people in eastern Congo. Hundreds also signed a United Church petition urging Canadian leaders to regulate Canadian mining companies operating overseas, including in Congo. And, perhaps hardest of all, many church folks agreed to go electronics-free for the day to raise awareness of the impact of mining in Congo for minerals that are used in smartphones and other electronic devices.

From a small beginning, an ongoing relationship has blossomed that connects a suburban United Church with sisters and brothers across the world.

Your gifts for Mission and Service are an act of compassion. Please give generously.

*Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to
do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.*





A Lenten Letter from Calcutta

Catherine Christie is overseas personnel serving with the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea, Seoul.

March 2013

On this Palm Sunday, I am sitting in the airport in Calcutta, India, after spending two weeks in an extraordinary Lenten pilgrimage.

I had received a request from Isua Krista Kohhran (Church of Jesus Christ) to attend its annual church assembly. I decided to revisit the Kandhamal District of Phulbani Diocese as well.

Isua Krista Kohhran is a small denomination of the Mizo people. They live a precarious life in their mountainous state, farming rocky land in the terraces they laboriously construct on the steep slopes. With so little land, their houses are suspended over space, held up by bamboo poles. Because medical care in this isolated area is so sparse, Isua Krista Kohhran has established pharmacies in a number of communities, each staffed by a nurse. The church plans in a few years to construct a simple hospital near its headquarters.

The Kui people of Kandhamal District are well known because of extremist violence against this Christian population in past years. Hundreds of people were killed, and hundreds of homes and churches destroyed. Phulbani Diocese is replacing houses lost to the violence with new ones that are more stable and secure. Forty-three churches have also been rebuilt. Sectarian tension in the area is still high, though.

As you hear the messages of the Easter season this year, please think of those sisters and brothers with whom we share this world. Thank you for your hope-filled gifts for Mission and Service, and please continue to give generously.

Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.



Disponible en
français!

▶ Companion
video
available

The Spirit of a Place



I could tell you what the website says. It says that the Windsor Youth Centre is Windsor, Ontario's, only drop-in centre for homeless and at-risk youth, and that it serves more than 1,200 meals each month. I could read you the mission statement: "The Windsor Youth Centre serves the basic and immediate needs of homeless and at-risk youth in a safe and friendly atmosphere with the aim to foster positive change and growth." That's easy.

What is difficult to describe is the sense of community. Providing safety, food, access to other services, and other necessities has been important, but it takes a visit to the centre to see that what is most valuable is the spirit of a place where people don't just learn to care for themselves but also care for one another.

Early in 2011, the Faith in Action Committee of Essex Presbytery identified youth homelessness as a priority. Through visiting other agencies and learning from the larger community, we began to understand the problem of hidden homelessness in our community. With a grant from the Essex Presbytery Development Fund and further monies from Mission and Service, plans began for the Windsor Youth Centre.

When the centre opened in October 2011, only two or three youth a night came in. However, once word spread throughout the community, the number of youth rose quickly, far exceeding our expectations. The Windsor Youth Centre was able to meet the need because of the generosity of congregations; the hard work, dedication, and compassion of its more than 50 volunteers; and ongoing support from Mission and Service grants.

Please continue to give generously so that youth can experience compassionate community.

*Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to
do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.*





Spirit Guides

Along the shores of northern Ontario's Lake Temiskaming is 279-acre Camp Lorrain. Established in 1931, it offers quintessential camp fare, from swimming, canoeing, and campfires to arts and crafts, nature study, and hiking. Fourteen staff members care for 36 campers. There are junior, intermediate, and family camps, along with a women's retreat and a counsellor-in-training program.

Each day the camp begins with Morning Watch. After breakfast, campers gather at Chapel Point, a piece of land jutting out onto the lake. They sing, pray, and hear stories that illustrate God's love for them and creation. At midday, they gather for their Spirit Session. According to Administrative Director Meghan Murphy, volunteer spirit guides lead participants in Bible study, games, crafts, skits, and storytelling. The guides are "people who are strong in their faith and good role models," says Meghan.

The guides make themselves available to respond to questions and spiritual concerns raised by campers. Sometimes this can be amusing. When told that a leader was a spirit guide, a young child asked, "Does that mean you talk to the dead?" At other times, the guides offer support for those struggling with homesickness or other personal issues.

For Meghan, Camp Lorrain provides youth with a "way to disconnect from technology and experience the beauty of nature and God's gift to us." This is felt especially keenly at the end of the day, when campers gather once again at Chapel Point for vespers. As the sun sets, a campfire is lit, and campers and staff alike experience the Spirit of God in nature once again.

Thank you for your gifts for Mission and Service, which support this vital camping ministry. Please continue to give generously.

Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.





Easing Past Ills



It's a beautiful spring day in Nova Scotia. At Tatamagouche Centre, people are scrambling through the underbrush looking for special plants. Plants that can settle your tummy ache or headache, plants that help ease many of life's daily ills.

Under the careful watch of Judy Bernard-Googoo, a Mi'kmaq healer, everyone is learning a few of the basics from centuries of Mi'kmaq traditional healing. Judy learned it from her mother, and her mother learned it from her own mother. Now, Judy wants to share her knowledge with others. "We are all one people," she says.

At Tatamagouche, mending the divide between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people is a high priority. Not just to meet, but also to really start to share their traditions and build bridges of understanding. Learning about the plants and herbs that are the basis of traditional Mi'kmaq healing is a window into Mi'kmaq culture.

"Everything is done with respect. You have to respect the plant, take only what you need, and always give thanks to the Creator for providing these healing medicines," explains Judy. "You have to be careful; there are a lot of plants that can hurt you. It's like going to the drug store—you have to make sure you choose the right medicine. That's the knowledge I have that I want to share."

Your gifts for Mission and Service help support our education centres, which bring people together to learn in community. Thank you, and please continue to give generously.

*Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to
do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.*





Birthing a Future

African women are a staggering 100 times more likely to die during childbirth than women anywhere else in the world. Fifty percent of all maternal deaths in the world happen in Africa.

Tanzania is no exception to these statistics. Working with the Tanzanian Ministry of Health, Mission and Service partner the Morogoro Women's Training Centre of the Christian Council of Tanzania is offering midwifery training to women from remote communities in Tanzania. Sometimes these women are the only trained health care workers accessible to local communities because hospitals and medical clinics are often far away and transportation is limited.

With the full-hearted support of United Church Women, the centre has held four maternal health care courses, training 20–24 women each time. The six-day curriculum covers birthing techniques, nutrition, emergency first aid, and CPR. It is supplemented by four additional days of other skills training in such areas as batik, soap-making, and business.

Midwives hold an important position in communities. While some women prefer to deliver in their home, others have no choice. Hospitals and clinics are far enough away that it may not be possible for a woman in labour to get there. And while the midwives are trained to recognize problems that might affect the health of baby and mother, referring complicated cases to hospitals is not always possible. The program provides the women with the skills they need and some basic equipment to deal with those challenges.

In partnership, your gifts for Mission and Service are helping to save babies and mothers in Tanzania. Please continue to give generously

Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.



Disponible en
français!

Companion
video
available

The Power of Not Knowing



Hazel Arbon, Program Staff for Mission and Education at Saskatchewan Conference, recounts this story of changing the world through her gifts for Mission and Service:

Several years ago, I was at a United Church workshop where one of the speakers was a man from one of the Central American countries. As he introduced himself, he said that The United Church of Canada had always had a very close connection to his heart.

At one point several years previously, the two sides in the civil war in his country were ready to sit down to some peace talks. Both sides were willing. Everything was set up—but they needed \$3,000 to make it happen, and they just did not have it. They approached the United Church, asking if we could help them in this way. The speaker said, “We had the money the next day.”

My eyes immediately filled with tears, and it took all of my willpower not to sob out loud. He was talking about the generosity of my church, my people—actually, maybe even me.

It is nice to be able to direct my money toward a project I pick out. That makes me feel good from the moment I write the cheque. But in that moment of listening to the speaker, I realized the power of also donating without knowing where my money might go. Maybe, just maybe, a tiny portion of *my* money helped end a civil war.

It still brings tears to my eyes to consider the many other ways my money and yours come together to make things better in this world of ours.

*Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to
do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.*





Emerging Farmers

Elizabeth is the grandmother in a household of nine people. She spent most of her life working on the big commercial farms that stretch across the Western Cape of South Africa, harvesting grapes, potatoes, and onions for the farmers. But she never actually learned how to farm herself.

Now, thanks to the support of the Surplus People Project in the Western Cape, Elizabeth is part of a group of six women farmers. They grow organic beets, tomatoes, onions, carrots, cabbage, corn, watermelons, pumpkins, and squash.

The staff of the Surplus People Project helped the women organize to ask the town for land and arrange for municipal taps to water their fields. They also provided the seeds and tools for the first year until the group could generate enough seeds of their own.

Elizabeth also learned the important aspects of organic farming, arranging for composted manure from livestock farmers and staying clear of expensive chemical fertilizers. She can feed her family throughout the year from her plot and has food left over to sell in the community. Recently she started canning the excess produce and selling her preserves, generating a steadier income.

The United Church of Canada through Mission and Service supports the work of the Surplus People Project. Small-scale farmers of the Western Cape are farming organically and sustainably for themselves and their communities. Thank you, and please continue to give generously.

Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.



Backyard Farming and the Patio Economy



On Nicaragua's Atlantic coast, the United Church supports the work of the Moravian Church and its development office, the Development Institute of the Moravian Church, known as ADSIM. ADSIM works with some of Nicaragua's poorest people in remote mountain villages and along jungle rivers. It supports projects that give people genuine self-determination and improved living conditions.

The institute has long worked with farmers to improve agricultural practice and obtain better results. More recently, it has begun to work on a "patio economy"—home gardens, grown in small plots or containers, that can produce additional food and improve the health of families.

The Indigenous and Afro-Caribbean people who make up the Moravian Church are facing what they call an "invasion" of junk food. The result has been an increase in nutrition-related health problems: high blood pressure and diabetes. Children face higher incidences of asthma, allergies, and lung issues.

As a demonstration project, ADSIM has set up a garden next to its office in the city of Bilwi. Here, staff are growing fruits and vegetables—and harvesting the seeds for distribution to gardeners. They provide training and support to those interested in developing their own home garden.

Another revolving program puts a new twist on livestock distribution. ADSIM provides five hens and a rooster to families. Repayment is in kind, as the family returns the same quantity of animals from their growing flock to the program for distribution to other families.

Your Mission and Service funds are helping to support backyard farming and improved family nutrition in Nicaragua. Please continue to give generously.

*Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to
do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.*





Cent-a-Meal

Disponible en
français!

▶ Companion
video
available

Lyn Miller held a small wooden box in her hand. It had a slot in the top and was labelled “In gratitude to the Giver of All Good Gifts. As a family we dedicate A-CENT-A-MEAL for the support of our Missionaries and other workers in the relief of human need.”

The box had been loaned to her by a retired United Church minister who didn’t know much about its origins. Lyn, a member of St. Andrew’s United Church in Peterborough, Ontario, wanted to feature the box during Children’s Time but needed to know more about it. She contacted the United Church’s General Council Office and was told the story of the Cent-a-Meal boxes.

It was 1933, the heart of the Great Depression. Thirty-three percent of Canadian workers were unemployed, and one in five Canadians depended on government relief. The United Church was having a hard time helping because donations were plummeting. Something had to be done. One successful church-wide program that emerged was the Cent-a-Meal box. Families were encouraged to take the boxes home and tithe a penny a meal toward Mission and Maintenance (now M&S).

There is no record of the amounts received. But we can get an idea from a report by Calgary’s Hillhurst United Church. In 1934, they noted that “the number of ‘Cent-a-Meal’ boxes in circulation varied between 93 and 109, and netted \$331.50.” That’s \$5,754 in today’s money, a large donation in hard times.

Maybe during our own economic downturn we should revive the cent-a-meal program—but update it to a nickel-a-meal, since there are no pennies left to collect?

Your gifts for Mission and Service help people and change lives. Please continue to bring hope and give generously.

Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.



Sisters and Brothers around the World



In May 2013, over 130 church leaders from all over the world, representing member churches of the World Council of Churches, gathered in Fatka, Lebanon, to discuss ways the world community can support Christians in the Middle East.

In the Arab Spring revolutions of 2011, long-standing dictatorships or controlling leaders were overthrown in several nations, the most notable ones being Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya.

These changes came at a cost for some Christian communities as certain militant factions became more powerful, leaving Christians feeling vulnerable and alone. The instability in Syria during the early part of 2013 was also on the minds and hearts of the assembled council. Two archbishops—the leaders of the Syrian Orthodox and Greek Orthodox churches in Aleppo—had been kidnapped a month before the WCC meeting.

After the four-day consultation in Fatka, the World Council of Churches issued a statement calling on the world church to support the Christians of the Middle East, to encourage new leadership in faith communities there, to lift up the gifts of women and children, to offer programmatic support to the Middle East Council of Churches, and to keep the region in our prayers.

The United Church of Canada is an active member of the World Council of Churches and supports programs through the Middle East Council of Churches, both M&S partners. In the spirit of Christ, we believe that when one body of the faith is suffering, we are all affected.

Your gifts for Mission and Service support Christians in the Middle East. Please continue to give generously.

*Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to
do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.*





Longhouse Council of Native Ministry

The Longhouse Council of Native Ministry started 30 years ago as an outreach to Aboriginal people in Vancouver. Established without a building, today this M&S ministry's home is a church in the low-income Hastings-Sunrise neighbourhood, and its outreach extends to all those seeking a caring community.

A significant commitment to First Nations people remains. There is a weekly sharing circle mostly (but not exclusively) attended by Aboriginal people, a carving and language class, and several 12-step groups, including an Aboriginal Alcoholics Anonymous group. However, the poverty and homelessness now growing in leaps and bounds have made the congregation a hub for anyone seeking economic and social justice.

Regular Sunday worship, baptisms, marriages, and funerals are central to Longhouse. So too are the weekly food bank and participation in annual Advent and Lent vigils to raise awareness of those who are silenced in the midst of the city. As the Rev. Barry Morris says, there is “creative tension between being a pastoral charge and a community ministry,” an urge to support as well as to change society.

Nowhere is this clearer than inside the battered old station wagon parked at the back of the church. It is loaned at no cost to those who need it, whether to move house, pick up groceries, attend a protest, visit a friend, or travel to the cemetery for the burial of a loved one. As Barry points out, Longhouse is simply following the call of Jeremiah 29:7 to “seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you in exile...for in its welfare you will find your welfare.”

Your gifts for Mission and Service are an act of compassion. Please continue to give compassionately.

Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.





Building a New Community



Once a model social housing project built in the 1940s, the Regent Park neighbourhood of Toronto quickly became socially and physically marginalized. It experienced the economic ills that accompany that: crime flourished, and people were stuck in cycles of poverty.

Along with other Regent Park residents of the area, the Toronto Christian Resource Centre, a United Church outreach ministry, realized nothing would change until the neighbourhood changed. A decade or more of helping to bring together three levels of government, developers, urban planners, and area residents has resulted in a massive multimillion-dollar makeover of the area as a mixed-income, mixed-use community.

The Toronto Christian Resource Centre has a new building where it runs dozens of programs to meet area residents' needs, including breakfast and lunch programs, a clothing bank, community gardens, and a laundry room and showers for homeless people. About 100 people on small fixed incomes who have experienced mental health issues or addictions, or who had lived on the streets for years, have new apartments on the top floors. The centre has also deliberately created opportunities for people from all walks of life to get to know one another and begin to form a stronger community. In alignment with Regent Park's revitalization, the centre focuses on bringing together existing residents and new residents, and continues to work with homeless people.

Your gifts to Mission and Service have supported this vision of a new community, and people's lives have been transformed. Thank you, and please continue to give.

Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.





Kids in the Kitchen

Health and wellness have a lot to do with what we eat. When kids have a hands-on opportunity to prepare the food they consume, they just might choose something healthy over junk.

Laura Peach, a student of nutrition and dietetics at Western University, teamed up with Kathy Douglas, Huron-Perth United Church Youth Minister, to bring a hands-on cooking and nutrition education program for children ages 8–12 to two United Churches in Huron County, Ontario, last summer funded by a Mission Support Grant. Kids in the Kitchen offered fun educational activities and a chance to prepare and sample healthy recipes each day. The day camp was a half-day Monday to Friday program.

Blyth United Church, Egmondville United Church, and Huron-Perth Presbytery recognize how eating and preparing food in community offers nourishment to the soul as much as to the body. With that in mind, they trained and paid young adults to run these food camps, offering much-needed, full-time, meaningful summer employment to youth.

Laura is excited and feels this was a chance to live her dream of helping children at a young age learn to appreciate growing, choosing, preparing, and sharing “real” food. “Every kid needs to develop a relationship with their food,” she claims, adding, “and it is not automatic knowledge to know what nourishes.”

Thank you for your Mission and Service gifts for this important food program. Please continue to give generously.

Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.



Disponible en
français!



Seniors Find Legal Help and Dignity

Montreal City Mission is founded on compassion, hospitality, and justice. For years, the mission has worked with refugees and new immigrants, helping them adjust to life in Canada. The staff offer advice and referrals to housing, health, education, and employment services.

In recent years, they noticed more and more seniors accessing their services. People who had immigrated or arrived as refugees at an older age began asking for help with legal matters related to immigration, housing, and social assistance. Senior immigrants face special problems and have few places to turn to for advice and help. They often come to Canada to join other family members but for a variety of reasons find themselves marooned in this country, navigating the complex web of social services alone. Montreal City Mission realized it needed a special legal clinic.

Young lawyers volunteer their time in the mission's legal clinic, dealing with various issues around immigration, retirement income, residency, and access to health care. They have even set up a mobile clinic to go to seniors who can't get to the downtown mission offices at St. James United Church. Services are free to senior refugees and immigrants over 55 who have a low income.

Your gifts for Mission and Service allow Montreal City Mission's legal clinic to help people who have lost hope find and make a new life in Canada. Thank you, and please continue to give generously.

*Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to
do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.*





Uniting to Fight Poverty

Women for Change, a long-standing Mission and Service partner of The United Church of Canada, works with rural communities in Zambia to make changes that benefit women and children. Zambia is one of the poorest countries in the world. Women and children, particularly girls, live with high levels of poverty.

Working from the vision “Never accept poverty. Unite and fight it,” Women for Change is committed to working with women in rural Zambian villages. They send staff into the villages to help local groups organize around the needs of the community. Working with a particular focus on women, girls, and their rights, the organization is careful to build relationships with traditional leaders and men to help ensure the success of projects. Called Field Animators, staff stay in the communities for three weeks every month and help groups of 35–40 villagers define the problems they face and determine local solutions. Women for Change brings organizational and technical expertise to communities and a strong commitment to building awareness around gender equity and human rights.

Local groups come together in groups of 10–15 to form an Area Association, with each group represented by two members. District Development Associations are formed from representatives of each of the Area Associations. In this way, rural Zambian communities from a wide area can share information, knowledge, and how each community has tackled issues in their own way. It creates a wider, supportive community that can share best practices and workable solutions.

Your gifts for Mission and Service help women in Zambia build a brighter future.

Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.



Mission and Service at the Centre



La Ronge is a northern Saskatchewan town framed by Lac La Ronge, the boreal forest, and the Precambrian Shield. For Michelle Gale, it is also home to La Ronge United Church, her place of worship for 40 years. The congregation is a Mission Support recipient church with a rich history of supporting Mission and Service.

Recently, Michelle decorated six tables used for a congregational dinner for the new Moderator, the Right Rev. Gary Paterson. It was the first time the church had received such a visit, and Michelle used centrepieces to illustrate the history of the congregation for the Moderator.

Each table had a theme. Michelle used music-patterned fabric to symbolize that “we may be the smallest church in the community, but we always have the biggest choir at community events.” The justice table held canned goods for the food bank. “Seven of its nine board members attend the church,” says Michelle.

The environment table was green and brown, representing nearby forests, while the UCW centrepiece held the life membership pin of a member known for her AIDS advocacy. The learning centrepiece was made from imperfect patches of fabric bound together with colourful sashing.

On the United Church table, an altar cross stood next to leather mittens handmade by Paul Powder, an Aboriginal friend. It was the eve of National Aboriginal Day, and they reminded people that a large part of the community is First Nations.

As the dinner ended, it was clear that the centrepieces prepared for the Moderator had sparked a broader celebration of the mission of the little church on the shores of Lac La Ronge.

*Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to
do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.*





Building Community

M has struggled with mental illness for most of her adult life. She has had several hospitalizations, but until the last one she never had a diagnosis or good follow-up care. The impact on her two young children was significant—each hospitalization resulted in placements in the foster care system. Facing the daily challenges of living in poverty doesn't make coping any easier.

The London Community Chaplaincy in Ontario has been a place of encouragement, support, and resources for M and her family. The children participate in the chaplaincy's after-school programs. They attend summer camp each summer thanks to sponsorships and volunteer drivers facilitated through the chaplaincy. M knows the chaplain is available whenever stress is leading to instability and the need for additional interventions or resources to maintain her mental health.

The London Community Chaplaincy is the new organization born from uniting Southdale and Limberlost chaplaincies, which occurred in the spring of 2013. Both founding organizations have worked in London's largest public housing complexes for decades. The unified chaplaincy has more capacity to respond to the needs of the families living in these communities.

Many of the families we walk with are pushed to the margins of society: folks who struggle with addictions, mental health, and the stigma of living in poverty. Christ calls us to walk with these families. You, who give to Mission and Service, walk with these families too. The church and Christ are visible in this important ministry. Please continue to give generously.

Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.



Calling for Action on Mining



Global and Canadian partners attending the United Church's 41st General Council in 2012 had this message for the church:

Christ is at the mine in Guatemala—
where people are devastated by a thirst for wealth...
Christ is where people fear, where the earth groans, where bodies
and souls ache.
And where Christ is, that is where the church must be also.

The United Church of Canada has heard many stories from partners about communities adversely affected by mining operations, many owned by Canadian companies. People have been displaced, water sources disrupted or contaminated, arable land and food production capacity destroyed. Many have lost their lives. Most are people whose stories and lives do not make headline news. Our partners are asking others, including the people of the United Church, to act to make a difference. They are asking all people to call on governments and mining companies to observe national and international law and environmental regulations. They are asking that communities affected by a mining operation participate fully in decisions made about the land they live on, the water they drink, and the community they live in.

Impunity, weak judicial systems, and corruption often work to silence the voices of victims of land-grabbing, human rights abuses, and environmental destruction. We are lifting up those voices so the stories can be heard in hopes the injustices can be addressed. Choices are stark. One activist describes the situation bluntly: "The people don't need gold. They need water."

Your gifts for Mission and Service are present with those calling for action on mining issues. Please continue to give.

*Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to
do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.*





We Support Each Other

Since 2005, Mission and Service partner the National Council of Churches of Kenya has worked on an initiative focusing on women and children living in the slums of five cities in Kenya. Life in the slums is characterized by high levels of poverty, high crime rates, and high levels of illiteracy. One of the largest slums in the central region of Kenya is called Kiawara.

United Church staff recently visited a group of 12 women in Kiawara who, with the help of the council and the United Church, have improved their lives and those of their families through a microloan program. The women in the program had the following messages for the United Church:

Thank you for helping this program. All of us have developed our businesses and improved our lives. We are more independent now. And we support each other.

This program is much better than the banks. With the banks you have a high interest rate. You have to have collateral, and they will take people's furniture and other belongings. Your husband has to go with you. You already have to have savings in the bank. With NCKK there isn't the same pressure. They will listen to you if there is an emergency. If you can't pay one week, you can double up the next week. They will loan you money for school fees for your children.

Your gifts for Mission and Service support women and children in the slums of Kenya. Please continue to give generously and compassionately.

Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.



Enthusiastic about Mission and Service



Carolyn Ruda is Montreal & Ottawa Conference's Mission and Service Support staff. She writes:

I have the privilege of being the Mission and Service Support for Montreal & Ottawa Conference—kind of a cheerleader for M&S. Whether I am invited to speak to a room full of adults or get down on the floor with the children, I get real joy out of talking about the numerous and varied ways Mission and Service helps others.

When I speak to the M&S Enthusiasts in the congregations, they are always anxious to share what is happening in their congregations to raise awareness of Mission and Service, whether it is the latest fundraiser, an M&S partner's visit, or the faithful and consistent reading of Minutes for Mission on a Sunday morning.

This is the time for all of us to ask: What can we as individuals and pastoral charges do to make sure the work carried out by our hard-working, loyal, and devoted partners continues? To make sure our overseas personnel have the support they need to be effective in the countries in which they so willingly serve? Many people in our society and in our communities are marginalized and feel disconnected, disenfranchised, or alienated.

Mission and Service-funded partners provide projects that say, "Here is a place for you. You belong and are welcome." Many of the mission-supported pastoral charges could not be the faith in action in their communities if it were not for your generous gifts. Our United Church Creed says to love and serve others, and so does Micah 6:8—so let us lift up and celebrate the essential work done by M&S.

Mission and Service is us being compassionate together. Please give.

*Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to
do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.*





Walls That Divide Are Broken Down

The Rev. Steve Berubé served as overseas personnel with the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel. He writes:

When I arrived in Bethlehem with the Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel, my jaw dropped. I had heard about the separation barrier but never imagined I would be greeted by a 25-foot-high wall with armed guards, watch towers, and a steel gate that resembles something designed to sustain a nuclear bomb. The wall dominates the landscape surrounding Bethlehem.

When built in 2005, it cast a huge shadow over the city where Jesus was born. Families lost orchards filled with olive, fig, and almond trees. They also lost fields where their sheep once grazed.

The wall cuts off Christians and Muslims from their holy sites in Jerusalem only five miles away. Palestinians must now apply for permits, which can be turned down for hundreds of reasons. It is easier for many Palestinians to travel to Germany than to Jerusalem.

The wall has a major effect on the economy of Bethlehem. Majdi, a local shop owner, talks about how most small businesses did well before its construction. Since then, his business has dropped by 65 percent. He says, “Most tourists don’t come to Bethlehem because they are afraid. Those who do usually take a day trip from Jerusalem and never leave Manger Square.” This once-thriving holy site now suffers with unemployment of over 60 percent.

Majdi and all who hope for peace long for the day when this wall that divides is broken down.

Your contributions to M&S bring a compassionate presence. Please give.

*Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to
do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.*



New Tenants



The century-old house next door to Norval United Church has been renovated for its new tenants. Formerly used by the congregation for office space, in September 2013 it became the temporary home of a group of young people aged 19–30, participants in Norval’s inaugural “intentional community” program. With financial support from the people of the United Church through the Mission and Service Fund, this residential program enables participants to explore their leadership potential and serve in the wider community.

A key part of the program is spiritual development. “I think young people are not averse to worship, praise, prayer, and spiritual practice, but it has to have meaning for them,” says Andrew Hyde, Norval’s youth minister. Participants meet with Hyde every other week to reflect on and set personal goals related to meditation, prayer, and scripture reading. Group worship is part of their daily routine. Many in the congregation are exploring their spirituality alongside the group, patterning their own prayer times after those established by program participants.

Located 40 minutes northwest of Toronto in a greenbelt area near the Niagara Escarpment, Norval United is deeply committed to environmental awareness and action. Intentional community participants volunteer with local environmental organizations and take an “eco-pilgrimage” along the nearby Bruce Trail through some of Ontario’s most pristine wilderness.

According to Hyde, through working, eating, and worshipping together, the young people in their intentional community ultimately experience Christ reflected in others and in themselves.

Your gifts for Mission and Service build community. Please give generously.

*Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to
do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.*





Sustaining Life for the Future

Mission and Service partner Asian Rural Institute trains grassroots rural leaders from around the world in organic and sustainable farming techniques, community development, and leadership. At the end of the program, participants return to their countries to work with others, sharing what they have learned to create healthier and more resilient communities.

Over 1,100 graduates in more than 50 countries are at work in their communities contributing to an environmentally healthy, just, and peaceful world. The Rev. Dr. Toshihiro Takami, founder of Asian Rural Institute, says, “We are investing in persons who will dedicate their life to sustain life for the future. It is a valid investment, a lasting investment in persons who will work as leaders for the people.”

The institute believes that giving a community power over their own food supply is the only way to ensure lasting food security for all people. Each farm, village, and community needs to find its own path that leads to a better quality of life. “Locally grown” development is far more likely to make a lasting change in people’s lives than ideas developed elsewhere. Through the institute’s programs, students learn to see and use resources locally available in their community rather than materials purchased and brought from distant places.

Based on Christian ideals, the institute works with a number of churches and different faith groups. Modelling servant leadership and the power of living a life that is an example and inspiration to empower all people to reach their potential, supported by Mission and Service, Asian Rural Institute is creating a force for change in the world.

Thank you for your gifts for Mission and Service—you are making a difference in people’s lives. Please give generously.

Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.



Disponible en
français!

▶ Companion
video
available

Pressed into Action



Some people might think it was an odd request. In the days after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, the Methodist Church of Haiti asked the United Church for support in buying a new printing press.

Didn't they need other things? Like tents, water, or food?

For our partners in Haiti, this printing press is a vital source of income as well as the main print shop in the country. As schools lay in rubble and children wandered the streets, there was an urgent need to get schools running again. But they needed books in French and Haitian Creole.

Methodist Church schools across Haiti educate thousands of children. Even if the post-earthquake facilities were makeshift, classes needed to resume to help the children cope with the catastrophe. So, with the United Church's help, a new printing press arrived within a few months. The staff had work again, and the books started rolling off the press and being shipped to the schools.

Four years later the printing shop is a going concern. Not only does it print textbooks and Sunday school curricula, but it also serves business clients in the community printing custom business forms, from invoices, receipts, letterhead, and envelopes to brochures and posters. The shop provides jobs for 20 people, and the income goes back into the Methodist Church's work in education and development.

Thank you for supporting the long-standing partnership between our United Church and the Methodist Church in Haiti. Your gifts for Mission and Service help educate thousands of children. Please give generously.

*Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to
do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.*





Driving to a Better Living

In Dumaguete City (pronounced Doom-a-GET-ee), Philippines, tricycles—motorcycle taxis with a side passenger car—are the main form of public transportation.

Very few of the 3,000 drivers own their tricycles. Earning about \$2.50–\$7.50 per day, many cannot afford to purchase their vehicle and have to rent from operators at a daily rate of \$7.50. Many drivers must borrow from unscrupulous “five-six operators”: for every 5-peso loan, the borrower pays interest of 1 peso every six days. This can accumulate to as much as 240 percent interest annually.

Mission and Service partner the Institute of Religion and Culture in the Philippines runs a program to help tricycle drivers earn a fair living for their family. Working closely with an association of drivers, the institute purchased tricycles that drivers buy on a rent-to-own basis. Through the program, 67 drivers have been able to purchase tricycles.

The Institute of Religion and Culture also finances small loans for school fees and other household essentials. One of the original participants, a tricycle driver whose wife is a street vendor, not only paid off his loan for the tricycle but also loans for children’s school fees and house repairs. The family now owns a decent house, and their three children have graduated from college and are working. The father still drives his tricycle; the mother is still a vendor.

The institute and the tricycle drivers’ association thank the people of the United Church for supporting families in Dumaguete City. Please continue to give generously.

Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.



Disponible en
français!

Supporting Church Workers



Each year Mission and Service partners the United Church of Christ in the Philippines and the Silliman University Divinity School hold a Church Workers Convocation. About 400 front-line church workers from across the Philippines come together for three days of intensive learning and reflection that inspire and equip them for ministry.

The convocation is not just an important continuing education event but also a way to build and deepen relationships among church workers. Participants get a chance to talk with others and share wisdom and experiences from a variety of perspectives.

Faculty from the Divinity School staff the convocation and offer theological reflections, discussion, seminars, and Bible study. The event provides opportunities to share innovative theological thinking and for church workers to refresh their calling. It is also a chance for the Divinity School to assess the curriculum it is offering and make it relevant to workers in the field.

The annual convocation is an important way for the United Church of Christ in the Philippines to ensure its workers are refreshed and supported in their ministries. The participants gain new insights and passion for mission in the 21st century.

Your gifts for Mission and Service are in the Philippines supporting church workers in mission and ministry. Please give generously.

*Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to
do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.*





Planting a Seed

In the village of El Tizate in Guatemala, Lidia works with *Fraternidad de Presbiteriales Mayas*, known as FPM, and a community group called *Semilla* (“seed”). FPM, a partner of The United Church of Canada, brings together 3,000 women of Mayan descent from across Guatemala working for development in their own communities.

The organization begins its work with groups like *Semilla* with a series of sessions where the hopes and dreams of the women to improve nutrition and livelihoods in their communities are heard.

Semilla proposed a microcredit program to help women buy and raise young steers for sale. After selling the calves, the investment is repaid and the profit complements family income. As a side benefit the women use animal waste as fertilizer and have learned many new “green” farming techniques for corn, potatoes, fruits, and vegetables. For most of the women in *Semilla* this has been the first time they have earned money of their own.

There has been a substantive impact on every aspect of life. Santa, a 61-year-old member of the group, says that never before had she attended meetings like these—a place where women can pool their knowledge and experience and work together to make a difference in their families and communities.

The women of the *Semilla* group are considering branching out in their business ventures. Their goal is to have three regular sources of income: raising calves, producing milk, and producing fertilizer. These women feel confident and strong. They like making their own money and want to do more to help themselves and their children, families, and communities. Your gifts for Mission and Service make this new hope possible! Please give generously

Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.





Learning Life Skills in Winnipeg

It's -40°C in Winnipeg in January. Two hours before the official start of the lunchtime drop-in at West Broadway Community Ministry, people are already sitting at the tables playing cards, talking, and enjoying the warmth. Many live in the surrounding rooming houses, and the drop-in, housed in Young United Church, is an important part of their daily routine. It's their community.

"I would still be in my house on all kinds of medication," says Kelly Ross, who now works at West Broadway, helping in the kitchen and supporting others who are walking a similar road. Kelly first came to West Broadway five years ago, and he is slowly turning his life around. Putting a stint in prison, drug addiction, and mental health issues behind him has not been easy, but with the support of West Broadway's staff, most of whom are volunteers from local churches, he is moving into employment for the first time in two decades.

"I realized I wasn't alone, that other people had the same problems, and that helped me so much," Kelly says.

"We provide a safe space," explains community minister Lynda Trono. "Without the Mission and Service Fund we couldn't run this program, and people would continue to be isolated in their rooms and shelters without any real support."

Thank you for your support of Mission and Service, which allows West Broadway to open its doors to the most marginalized people and give them a sense of love and hope. Please give generously.

*Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to
do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.*





Connecting the Christian Family

Kristine Greenaway, United Church overseas personnel, served with Mission and Service partner the World Communion of Reformed Churches in Geneva. Kristine writes the following reflection as she moves from WCRC to the United Church's General Council Office:

Ljenljenman (pronounced Chen-chen-men) is a member of Taiwan's Paiwan Aboriginal people. She serves as Women's Secretary for the predominantly Aboriginal presbytery of the Presbyterian Church of Taiwan that sits at the southern tip of Taiwan. The women of the presbytery support projects to help single women, theological scholarships, and church growth. In 2013 they celebrated Women's World Day of Prayer with a service focused on immigrants to France. Funds gathered at the service supported a Taiwanese woman missionary in Ethiopia involved in a Bible translation project in the country.

I was struck by the vision of Paiwanese women praying for people who are seeking a new life in a European country they have never seen, and supporting a Taiwanese missionary serving in Ethiopia.

Ljenljenman also spoke of a joint project between the Paiwan women of Taiwan and Mizoram (tribal) women from the Presbyterian Church of India. Women from the two countries reached across boundaries and found common ground working together on justice concerns for children, women, and family. For me these stories eloquently describe the importance of connecting the Christian family.

As I prepare to return to Canada, my "baggage" will include stories reminding me of how global migration, culture, and faith can form bonds that reach across church and political boundaries.

Thank you for your gifts for Mission and Service that build community and connect the Christian family. Please give generously.

Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.



Korean and United Church Partnership



Catherine Christie is overseas personnel serving with the long-time Mission and Service partner the Presbyterian Church in the Republic of Korea (PROK). The PROK and the National Council of Churches in Korea are calling on political leaders to actively work for peace in the region. Catherine writes:

The year 2013 was significant: it was the 60th anniversary of the 1953 Armistice in Korea that created the demilitarized zone and separated North from South Korea. And it is past time for a peace treaty.

The ecumenical relations secretary of PROK said at a Bangkok meeting:

We pray and plan for ways to encourage the governments involved to work for the realization of a permanent Peace Treaty, and to strive to come up with a tenable and sustainable agreement and processes that will narrow down differences in the military, political, economic, and social divide between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea.

The leadership of the Korean Presbyterian Church and the National Council of Churches in Korea ask for support of partner churches as they go forward in this process, encouraging Korean Christians in a bold, wise, prophetic response to the call of God for peace and justice.

Thank you for your continued support through Mission and Service, which works for peace and justice for Korean people. Please continue to give generously.

Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.





Supporting Human Rights

The United Church of Canada and Mission and Service global partners believe all people are created equally in the image of God and all people of the world have a God-given right to a life of dignity and respect. We stand with people working for human rights around the world.

Peace, development, and human rights are inseparable from the human dignity of individuals and the well-being of our communities. Without human rights, human dignity is merely an empty wish.

Most countries have agreed on numerous human rights standards and enshrined them in international law. However, many governments do not meet their obligations and routinely violate the rights of citizens. In many places in the world people live with the constant threat of violence and intimidation. For many partners, defending basic human rights has been a costly struggle—sometimes a life-and-death struggle.

There is a gap between many governments' words and deeds, promises and actions. People of faith work to address that gap, answering God's call to work for justice, peace, and human dignity and to bring freedom from want and fear.

Your gifts for Mission and Service are present with people and communities working for human rights and showing compassion for all. Please continue to give generously.

Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.



Super Heroes or Super Friends?



Carolyn Ruda, Mission and Service Support staff in Montreal & Ottawa Conference, reflects on the Mission and Service graphic novels:

Do you think that any of you are super heroes? Do you think I'm a super hero? Look around you. Do you think anyone in church here this morning is a super hero?

Nobody here is a super hero, but do you know that we can be Super Friends? They are even better than super heroes, who are only in movies, books, and pictures. Super Friends are people who are real and compassionate and respond generously when there are natural disasters and other emergencies in the world.

The children who accompanied their parents to the last two Montreal & Ottawa Conference annual meetings had fun learning about being Super Friends, complete with capes. The United Church's children's resource, *Super Friends*,* teaches that when there is a disaster in the world, the United Church is able to quickly contact our partners, such as ACT Alliance, to learn the specific needs of the community and to respond.

*Super Friends 2** teaches children and their parents that the United Church works with Mission and Service partners in other countries, such as Christian Care Zimbabwe, whose priorities are community access to food and the ability to grow food locally. In Canada, partners such as the food bank at the House of Lazarus in Mountain, Ontario, address poverty in rural areas.

When we make supporting our Mission and Service a regular part of giving, we are Super Friends to people we will never meet. We are changing people's lives. Please give generously

*Both resources are available from ucrdstore.ca.

*Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to
do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.*





Rainbow Ministry

How many of us have been rejected by our families, friends, and communities? How many of us have been kicked out of our homes for being who we are? How many of us have been rejected by our children?

For members of the LGBTTTQQ community, these are all-too-real scenarios. LGBTTTQQ stands for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Two-Spirit, Queer, and Questioning. Rainbow Ministry is an outreach ministry of Winnipeg Presbytery in Winnipeg, Manitoba. We work exclusively with the LGBTTTQQ community.

We have presented workshops and led discussions in churches around affirming and inclusivity issues in the church. Our work includes giving workshops at the Manitoba province-wide Gay/Straight Alliance conference, speaking at rallies, and providing pastoral care in the community, Bible studies, discussion groups, and a presence at Winnipeg's Pride celebrations.

For many members of the LGBTTTQQ community the church is a place of pain, hurt, and anger. We work with people to show the love of God to all, to show that there are places of faith where all are accepted for who they are born to be. The moment we say the word "church" or "God," many people pull back—even if they are missing the spiritual in their lives—due to the pain of the past. We are working to overcome this pain and to find a spiritual home for all.

Your gifts for Mission and Service help to offer a compassionate community and healing for all God's people. Please give generously.

Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.



Advent Candle-Lighting Liturgy

November 30 and December 7, 14, 21

This Advent liturgy seeks to integrate the worship and work of the church. Provide the congregation with paper decorations as symbols for where that week's gift is needed or being offered. These are hung on a "Jesse tree" before the reading each week (Isaiah 11 speaks of the good work that "the shoot from Jesse's stump" will do). Cut a leafless but living branch and place it in a Christmas tree stand with water. It may leaf out by Christmas Eve! Music can be played as people hang their symbols on the Jesse tree. Then, as the prayer is read, encourage Voice Two to include current needs in the world and your community. Please feel free to adapt the liturgy to fit your community and context.

Advent One

Voice One: Watch the eastern sky for the first star of night.

Voice Two: Search the newspapers for a good news story.

Voice One: Remember the story of a child born in a difficult time to bring hope

Voice Two: and remember people who need hope today, especially...

Voice One: Hope is coming!

Read the Minute for Mission for November 30.

Voice Two: Let us open our hands to share the hope we hold in our hearts!

Sing verse 1 of "Hope Is a Star," Voices United 7, as the candle is lit.

Advent Two

Voice One: Listen for the cry of a jay defying the arrival of winter.

Voice Two: Listen for the wind that carries snow to cover the earth for a season of rest.

Voice One: Listen for the first cry of a child and the song that announces, "Peace on Earth!"



Voice Two: Listen for the cries of those who need peace in our day, especially...

Voice One: Peace is being built!

Read the Minute for Mission for December 7.

Voice Two: Let us open our mouths to share the promise of peace.

Sing verse 2 of “Hope Is a Star” as the candle is lit.

Advent Three

Voice One: Touch the bright ornaments and the tree.

Voice Two: Sense the quick heartbeat of excitement in a child, in you.

Voice One: Remember the wonder of the woman told she would bear Emmanuel, God-with-us.

Voice Two: Remember those who need joy in our day, especially...

Voice One: Joy is coming!

Read the Minute for Mission for December 14.

Voice Two: Let us open our hearts to share our joy.

Sing verse 3 of “Hope Is a Star” as the candle is lit.

Advent Four

Voice One: Anticipate the taste of favourite foods.

Voice Two: Anticipate the love of gathered friends and family.

Voice One: Wait for the news that Emmanuel is here, that God is with us.

Voice Two: Pray for those who need God’s presence, especially...

Voice One: God’s love comes!

Read the Minute for Mission for December 21.

Voice Two: Let us open our arms to share the love we have known!

Sing verse 4 of “Hope Is a Star” as the candle is lit.



Disponible en
français!



Waiting for Hope to Be Born

The Rev. Tiina Cote served as overseas personnel with the Christian Council of Tanzania as a chaplain at the University of Dodoma. Tiina reflects on hope for the Advent season:

What happens when hope is born through the grace of God? As I witness the intensity of University of Dodoma students' long, loud prayers to God, I imagine the intensity of Joseph's prayer to his God on those many nights after the birth of a promise.

As I see the tears fall from the students' faces when they sing thanks to their God, I imagine Mary's face as she sings her song of blessing and promises fulfilled by her God.

And when students feel empowered and able to speak their truth out loud, I imagine the confidence of Zechariah as he stood in a countercultural moment and claimed the name of hope for his son as given by his God.

Such is the face of Advent hope across the world today. Each of us has been silenced in some way, yet we hold a story of hope waiting to be born again. For the University of Dodoma students of the Christian Council of Tanzania, that story is being born with the support of your generous gifts for Mission and Service, which help fund the chaplaincy at the university.

May the difference that you help these students to make in their own lives be your story of hope this year. Please give generously.

*Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to
do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.*





Peace-Building in Colombia

Susan Ferguson is overseas personnel serving with the Program of Ecumenical Accompaniment in Colombia. She writes:

Colombians take intense pride in tradition and a rich array of cultures. Colombia is also a place of violence stemming from long-standing conflicts between the state and guerrilla groups and from a thriving drug trade. There are wide divisions between the very wealthy and the very poor. Widespread hunger and poverty are simple facts of life for many. There is lack of trust in those in authority. And the people are weary.

Every day people are forced out of the countryside by paramilitary attacks and the takeover of land by large corporations, including traditional land belonging to Indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities. Every day, displaced people arrive in cities without work, housing, community support, or traditional ways of growing and using food.

Three Mission and Service partners in Colombia work for peace with justice. The Colombian Methodist Church carries out social ministries among displaced people and in Afro-Colombian and Indigenous communities. The Centre for Popular Communication trains children, youth, women, and young journalists in new ways of collaboration, creating a “culture of peace.” The Justice and Life Project, headed by human rights defender Lilia Solano, is directly involved in political processes that draw government, guerrillas, and civil society organizations into peace talks.

Your gifts for Mission and Service are working for peace in Colombia. Please give generously.

Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.



Disponible en
français!

The Observer



Radio provides background noise while you make dinner. You can watch TV and knit. Hours at a computer are spent multitasking. But when you read a magazine, your entire field of vision is filled with printed images, words, and pictures.

When you sit down with *The United Church Observer*, you are welcomed into a place of contemplation where you will find conversations about things that matter. The publishers are deeply grateful for your loyalty and want to continue to produce a publication that is worthy of it.

The oldest continuously published magazine in North America and the second-oldest in the English-speaking world, *The United Church Observer* has engaged Canadians for 184 years. Award-winning journalism focused on issues of faith, justice, and contemporary living encourages people in the pews and beyond to broaden their understanding of what it means to be a Christian in Canada today.

This important work is supported by a Mission and Service grant received annually through the efforts of congregations like yours. As Dag Hammarskjöld said, “For all that has been, thanks; for all that will be, yes.”

Please give generously.

*Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to
do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.*





May This Never Happen Again

For more than 180 years there has been a church on the traditional lands of Aamjiwnaang First Nation in Sarnia, Ontario. It has been the goal of the congregation of St. Clair United Church over the years to live out Micah's words: to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God. That has meant listening to the spiritual and other needs of the people in the community and to be a voice for those experiencing racism, poverty, and especially the impacts of Indian Residential Schools.

Congregation members wanted to learn these impacts from Elders who had been students of the schools, including the United Church-run Mount Elgin Industrial Institute near London, Ontario. A decision was made to erect a monument acknowledging the anguish of the members of Aamjiwnaang who attended residential school as well as celebrating their resilience. Located next to the church, the stone tribute reads:

Dedicated to all our children who were taken from their families, their homes, their community, their language, their culture, their traditions, their life.

Kinago Bimaadziowin

The story of residential schools is an ignoble chapter in Canadian history. Our community continues to suffer. For more than a century well over 100,000 Aboriginal children attended these institutions.

May This Never Happen Again

Your gifts for Mission and Service ensure that the ministry of St. Clair United Church continues and its determination to build right relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people can be lived out. Please give generously.

Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.



Disponible en
français!

Helping Widows to Be Seen



Pushpa Kuor from Chittorgarh, India, did something unimaginable. She danced at her son's wedding celebrations.

Pushpa is a widow and block leader in the Association of Single Women. Founded and supported by Mission and Service partner Astha Sansthan, the association helps single women claim their rights in Indian society.

Widows like Pushpa are expected to observe a mandatory year-long mourning period, living in confinement with no outside contact, wearing dark clothes and no jewellery. Pushpa was rescued from confinement by her aunt and introduced to the Association of Single Women.

It was a life-changing experience for her. She says:

When my husband was alive, I wasn't even allowed to go to the market to buy vegetables on my own. After he died I began to run the house and slowly started taking things upon myself. But it didn't happen easily. Like most widows in my area, when my husband died, I thought my life was over. I spent my days crying inconsolably. Through the Association for Single Women I was exposed to the idea that it is okay to live your life, even as a widow. I realized that with self-belief and confidence, I could do anything. When the time came for my sons to marry I said I'd organize it all. A widow isn't meant to be seen, let alone perform the pre-wedding prayers to Lord Ganesha. But I said I would do it. And I have. I did all of that and with great joy.

Working with Astha Sansthan, your gifts for Mission and Service are changing women's lives in India. Please give generously.

*Mighty and tender God, our gifts to M&S help your church to
do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you.*



Making the Mission and Service Connection

Setting: Granma sits in a comfortable chair with her knitting. Mom stands as if in the middle of a chore. Youth is on the floor with a laptop or tablet.

Granma: Back in my day, children did not play cards on a Sunday.

Mom: Mother, please don't be so hard on him.

Youth: Besides, Gran, I'm playing a computer game.

Granma: Called?

Youth: "Spider Solitaire."

Granma: And is it played as if with cards?

Youth: Of course, that's how...

Granma: My point. Sunday is for worthwhile things.

Mom: Mom, he went to church with us, and he'll do his homework after supper.

Youth: *He* is called Jim. *And* I did my homework yesterday.

Granma: What was the homework about?

Youth: Current events. Had to go through a newspaper for important stories.

Granma: What did you find?

Youth: Lots of trouble, not good Sunday stories.

Granma: Really? But Sunday is a good day to talk about change that brings hope and peace.

Mom: Remember what the minister said about praying for people in need.

Youth: Yeah, but some of these are big problems.



Granma: Prayer can be big. And we can do more than pray. We can show love in practical ways.

Youth: I suppose. Church and God are supposed to help us feel better.

Granma: More than that, Jim. We can work for a new vision for our community and our world, a more just vision. What did you find in the paper?

Jim: *(Lists a couple of current situations around the world.)*

Granma: And through Mission and Service and special appeals, we have helped the people suffering in situations like these.

Mom: There are needs close to home too. *(Names a couple of local issues.)*

Granma: And there are United Church people working to bring compassion, hope, and justice to communities like these.

Youth: I suppose gifts to M&S support that too.

Mom: You've got Internet there. Why don't you find out some of the other work we are part of when we give to M&S?

Youth: Already on it. There is some neat stuff here. Listen. *(Reads a Minute for Mission.)*

Granma: That's why I mark my envelope for M&S every week. That's why your parents on PAR include a regular M&S contribution.

Youth: In our class we have a coin jar. When something good happens, we give thanks and a gift for Mission and Service.

Mom: Giving thanks is part of our walk with God.

Youth: Speaking of which, I have to walk the dog. That's my Sunday chore. Want to come, Granma?

Granma: Back in my day, dogs never came into the house. But today I could use the walk. I could tell you some good stories about building a new community. I lived through the Depression, you know.

Mom: We know, Mom.

Granma: In that hard time, faith gave us hope and strength and vision. Things we need today.



Seeing a New Way

M&S Children's Conversation

Do you know any stories about magic mirrors? There's the mirror in the Snow White story, but in some stories a mirror shows what is happening far away or what a person is really like. When Jesus spoke of the kingdom of God, and the Hebrew prophets spoke of the work God was doing, their vision was like a magic mirror showing what had gone wrong and what good thing God was working toward.

Project the image "Reflection" found on www.flickr.com/photos/unitedchurchcda/sets under "Minutes for Mission 2014." Invite the children to talk about the "magic" reflection that shows what we have done wrong and what we could restore. What would they put into a magic reflection of their community?

Read Micah 6:8.

Easy for Micah to say, but how do we live those words? We need some reflections to show us the way. One of the places we can look to for guidance is the work supported by Mission and Service. These stories show us ordinary people living the way the prophet describes.

Read a Minute for Mission.

God has provided us with a vision that acts like a magic mirror, showing us when we've slipped but also showing us the path of kindness and justice, the path to walk with God toward a new world.



Collin Kavaner

