

A new look for
Minutes for Mission!



2021

Your Generosity Matters

8 Inspiring Mission & Service Stories and Devotions



The United Church of Canada / L'Église Unie du Canada

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Questions/Feedback?

Drop us a line at ms@united-church.ca.

We'd love to answer your questions and hear about why Mission & Service matters to you.

Want to Keep Up to Date on How Your Gifts Are Making a Difference?

Reach out to ms@united-church.ca and ask to be added to our mailing list.

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*Together we help to transform and save lives,
inspire meaning and purpose,
and build a better world.*



Photo: Our Place Society

“I lost hope. When you lose hope, then everything else goes with it,” says Blanche, who became homeless after fleeing an abusive relationship. Today, Blanche is turning her life around, has found stable housing, and is taking computer classes. “I am determined now. I have hope again.”

Welcome to the New *Minutes for Mission!*

Friends,

COVID-19 has changed everything—including how we tell the amazing stories of the life-changing difference Mission & Service makes.

Meet eight real people whose lives have changed thanks to your gifts.

These stories are offered with prayers and scripture readings for personal and small group devotions. Videos and slides that can be adapted for a variety of screens, plus shorter versions of each Minute suited to social media and bulletins, are available online.

Eight stories—is that all? No! In addition to these stories, there will be special Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas stories available in multiple formats, *and* all year long we will be sharing news features that describe up-to-the-minute ways your Mission & Service gifts are making a difference.

We will be sharing as many stories as ever with you, but now they will be delivered differently so we can share the good news of what your support is doing *right now*.

Why the changes? Before the pandemic, we sent *Minutes for Mission* booklets to print nearly a year ahead of when you read them. Many of these stories centred on ways we help people face to face or described large in-person gatherings we anticipated would happen. When we were all thrust into social isolation, the stories seemed out of touch. Our materials, which were geared to hour-long in-person worship, didn't work for everyone anymore.

Your Mission & Service gifts are critical as the pandemic makes Canadians and people around the world even more vulnerable.

We want to share how your support helps transform and save lives right now.

What else is different? Some stories will be deeply personal; others will be breaking news. Our core Minutes for Mission stories—the eight in this booklet—can be mixed and matched to suit any situation or medium you may have, and accompanying devotions ensure that our church’s mission is deeply rooted in our faith practice.

Where can I get these incredible stories and offer feedback? Access all the stories online at www.united-church.ca. Click “Mission & Service” on the homepage or search “**Stories of Our Mission.**” You can also subscribe to the *God’s Mission, Our Gifts* e-newsletter and have all the current stories delivered right to your inbox every month. Visit www.united-church.ca/e-newsletters.

We are working hard to adapt to the changing times, and we’d love to hear your feedback. Sharing the amazing results of your gifts is our top priority. We are grateful for any advice you can offer to help us do that better.

As you can see in these stories, through Mission & Service we help transform and save lives, inspire meaning and purpose, and build a better world. Every day.

Thank you for your generosity!

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Trisha Elliott". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Rev. Trisha Elliott

A Fresh Start: **Aria's Story**



We all know what it's like to need a fresh start. But some of us have more support systems and opportunities in place to help us get the new beginning we need.

Aria was in the third year of getting a law degree when she discovered she was pregnant. Without close family to lean on and limited financial resources, she had to take a break from school and go to work. To support herself and the child she was expecting, she took two jobs, arriving at the first at 6 a.m. and finishing the second at 10:30 p.m.

“I was on the unstable side of things, trying to find stable housing and later, daycare. I just needed a start. I was on my own,” she says.

A social worker referred Aria to the Massey Centre, an organization supported by your Mission & Service gifts that helps pregnant and parenting adolescents aged 13–25. At the Massey Centre, Aria enrolled in maternity classes and motherhood programs, received help getting her driver's licence, and found stable housing.

“We really appreciate your support. There's a lot of young children and parents here that definitely benefit from your help. We'd love your continuous support in the future.”

—Aria

“As a young person, I was thrown into the world. I never had the start that I would have liked. I had to figure a lot of things out. The best part about being at the Centre is that I feel like I am in a safe, supportive environment, and I am around other moms in the same situation. The staff are like family to me. They show up for you, and that’s important,” she says.

Aria is a proud mother of a happy, healthy 17-month-old boy named Amari. She is finishing the fourth year of her law degree and has important dreams.

“I want to be a good mom. I feel that I am a good mother. But I want a good job so I can support Amari and help other people. I had a rough start in life. That’s why I’m studying law. I’m hoping to be of some use as a lawyer to benefit young people who went through things like I did,” she says.

Your gifts through Mission & Service give ambitious, intelligent young moms like Aria as well as their beautiful children the stability they need to thrive. Make a gift to Mission & Service today. Choose to give families a fresh start. Thank you!



Photos: The United Church of Canada

Listen

Isaiah 43:18–19

Do not remember the former things, or consider the things of old. I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.

Sing

"I See a New Heaven," *Voices United* 713

"There Is a Time," *More Voices* 165

"I Was There to Hear Your Boring Cry,"

VU 644

Reflect

- Where do you witness God at work in the world doing a new thing?
- When have you had a fresh start? What supports did you have to help you?
- Where is newness springing forth in your life?

Pray

At a Gathering

Your way is a way of love, O God. Help us be loving. Your way is a way of grace, O God. Help us be gracious. Your way is a way of peace, O God. Help us be peaceful. Your way is a way of compassion, O God. Help us be compassionate. Let your way guide us as we gather. Steady us on your path to experience the unfolding of your Spirit. Amen.

For Personal Devotion

In the wilderness, you make a way.

In the desert, you carve a river.

You draw me toward a fresh start, O God.

I am grateful.

Turn my gratitude to your mission and service.

A mission to support others seeking a way.

A service that holds the promise of a fresh start.

For your way, your truth, and your light I pray, O God.

Amen.

"I'm hoping to be of some use as a lawyer to benefit young people who went through things like I did." —Aria

You Are There
Every Step
of the Way:
Jason's Story



There's a saying: "You can't understand another person's experience until you've walked a mile in their shoes." Today, there are 2,900 active and aspiring ministry personnel in The United Church of Canada, and you have travelled alongside them in their journey. Your gifts through Mission & Service support ministry students every step of the way by helping with education costs and providing financial support.

The Rev. Jason Meyers, a new ordinand, didn't grow up in the church. "It was through a series of events that happened in my life, through brokenness and suffering and having the person of Jesus influence how my life was unfolding, that ministry became an option," he explains.

After his son was born, Jason couldn't ignore the call to ministry he had felt for some time. "After Isaiah was baptized, our minister asked me to write Isaiah a letter that he would read when Isaiah is confirmed as a teenager. I started to write things like 'Isaiah, I want you to follow your dreams and follow what God is calling you to do in your life.' I realized that I wasn't doing that in my own life."

The day after writing the letter to his son, Jason walked to a theological

***"The church is alive and vibrant,
and it's worth investing in."***

—Jason

college to learn more about ministry education.

A few years later, Jason was heading off on another walk, this time to his ordination ceremony. The journey started at Emmanuel College in Toronto and ended in Barrie, Ontario, a two-week, 225-kilometre-long spiritual pilgrimage. As he walked, Jason reflected on his journey with God and prepared himself spiritually for ordination and ministry.

That was in 2019. Since then, what has surprised Jason most about ministry is his expanding capacity to love. "I thought that when my kids were born, that was kind of the size my heart would be, but I've come to love the church, the people, and the vocation of ministry more deeply than I ever imagined. I'm so thankful that Jesus reached into my life and invited me on this journey with him," he says.

And what would Jason say to those whose generosity has supported his journey to ordination through Mission & Service?

"I'd say it's worth it. The church is alive and vibrant, and it's worth investing in. The leaders are working hard and are bringing the best of themselves into the ministry, into the church, and into the world."

Please give a gift through Mission & Service. Through your gifts, you show you care about quality ministry leadership. Thanks to your generosity, love is there, training and supporting leaders every step of the way.



Photos: The United Church of Canada

"I'm so thankful that Jesus reached into my life and invited me on this journey with him."

—Jason

Listen

Micah 6:8

He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Sing

"Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song," VU 641

"One More Step Along the World I Go,"

VU 639

"What Does the Lord Require of You," VU 701

Reflect

- When have you done justice, loved kindness, and walked humbly with God?
- What do justice, kindness, and humility have in common?
- Consider instances where the pursuit of justice isn't kind and humble, and when it is.

Pray

At a Gathering

Accompanying God, you are among us as we gather together just as you have always been with us. We give you thanks for the times when your Spirit has been apparent in our journey, when we have witnessed your goodness in each other, and when we have sensed your wisdom in this group. May your goodness and wisdom continue to bless us now. May we sense your grace and let it guide us. Amen.

For Personal Devotion

God of the journey,
You go before me, preparing my way.
You go behind me, encouraging me on.
You go above me, broadening my horizon.
You go below me, anchoring my path.
You go beside me, my companion and friend.
Thank you for being here every step of the way. Amen.

"I thought that when my kids were born, that was kind of the size my heart would be, but I've come to love the church, the people, and the vocation of ministry more deeply than I ever imagined."

—Jason



Your Generosity Has a Worldwide Impact: **Mambud's Story**

We don't always know the extent of the good we do even when we are giving generously. When we make a gift, we hope to have an impact but often can't foresee how many lives we touch or how far our care extends. Mambud Samai's story is a tangible example of how your gifts through Mission & Service send ripples of compassion across continents.

Mambud, a pastor, lives in Sierra Leone, where an estimated 27,000 citizens became amputees during the civil war that raged between 1991 and 2002.

To support amputees he visited in rehabilitation camps after the war, Mambud turned to soccer, his country's favourite sport. He founded a soccer league for amputees called the Single Leg Amputee Sports Club of Sierra Leone to help restore hope. Now 350 members strong, the league isn't just about helping amputees overcome discrimination, restoring their pride, and providing therapeutic support. As if these alone aren't amazing.

"I would like to thank the donors for providing support. I want to thank them very, very much. I want to encourage them that their support is never going in vain." —Mambud

Two years ago, Mambud decided he wanted to make an even bigger difference. So, he flew all the way to the Asian Rural Institute (ARI for short), a unique school in Japan that your Mission & Service gifts support. Thanks to generous supporters like you, ARI trains thousands of leaders like Mambud from all over the world to grow food, tend livestock, and be effective change agents in their community.

“In my country, many young people see farming as a dirty job. I’ve been speaking to them about agriculture being the best job in the world. Many of the young people are now loving it. Especially at harvest time.”
—Mambud

After graduating from the nine-month program at ARI, Mambud returned to the soccer fields of Sierra Leone with a new goal: to develop teaching farms where people can learn to grow food sustainably and support themselves financially by selling that food at market.

Mambud and members of the Single Leg Amputee Sports Club of Sierra Leone now run an educational farm, and there are plans to convert more of Sierra Leone’s fertile land into gardens and teaching centres. In a country where the average person lives just 43 years, Mambud’s extraordinary leadership and the skills he learned in Japan save lives.

From Canada to Japan to Sierra Leone—Mambud’s story is just one example of how your gifts do a world of good.

If Mission & Service giving is already a regular part of your life, thank you so much! If you have not given, please help transform and save lives, inspire meaning and purpose, and build a better world through our shared Mission & Service.

By supporting leaders like Mambud with education and training, your generosity helps change lives around the world. Thank you!

Listen

Ephesians 3:20–21

Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Sing

“Take My Life and Let It Be,” VU 506

“I, the Lord of Sea and Sky (Here I Am, Lord),” VU 509

“Spirit, Open My Heart,” MV 79

Reflect

- When in the past have you felt most strongly that your life aligned with God’s mission?
- When has something you have done had a surprisingly positive impact?
- Where do you sense God’s Spirit nudging you now?

Pray

At a Gathering

Remind us, Holy One, that we are always leaving an impression on the world you so lovingly created for us. Everything we think, say, and do leaves a mark. Bless us as we gather to consider the impact we already have and can have on our community and world. Deepen our commitment to live out the spiritual mission to which you call us. In Jesus’ name we pray, amen.

For Personal Devotion

Here I am, Lord.

Here I am, open to your grace and guidance.

Here I am, ready to be carried on the wings of your vision to fulfill the deepest purpose to which you call me.

Steady and strengthen me to live into your loving mission.

Here I am, Lord.

Amen.



Photos: p. 13 The United Church of Canada; p. 15 Mambud Samai



Building a World Where Everyone Belongs: **Lynda's Story**

Everyone belongs; that belief anchors our United Church. It's why your Mission & Service gifts support gatherings of people who are left on the margins of society and support education events that help us learn what we can do about it.

Disability is one aspect of social justice the United Church is working on. Did you know that one in five Canadians live with at least one disability? That's 6.2 million people. Of these, 1.2 million can't afford aids, devices, or prescription medications. People living with severe disabilities have half the income of those with none. Seniors are almost twice as likely to have a disability as people who are of working age.

Disability is an issue that affects us all. That's why the United Church partners with people from other denominations to raise awareness. People like Anglican disability activist Lynda Katsuno, who is widely considered a pioneer in the field.

Lynda has lived with disability since she was in a car accident in 1973. At the time, she was a primary school teacher and loved her job working with children.

"I became a disability activist when I realized it takes political will to change society for the better." —Lynda

After the accident, she wasn't sure if she would be able to return to what she loved because the school wasn't accessible. Lynda credits a committed principal and board of education superintendent for making the changes that would enable her to return to her job.

"I became a disability activist when I realized it takes political will to change society for the better. Our community is made stronger when we include people with disabilities. If people with disabilities were fully welcome, the world would be a richer place. It would be a place where there is hope and no fear," she says.

Ideals of mutuality, inclusivity, and justice drive Lynda's passion to make the world a better place for all. "I don't want to be seen as a poor, pathetic person. I want to be seen as a child of God," she says.

Your generosity supports events and education that help create healthy, strong, welcoming communities inside and outside the church. Communities where no one is left out. Where we are all valued as children of God.

Let's build a world where everyone belongs. Make your Mission & Service gift for belonging today.



Photos: The United Church of Canada

Listen

Romans 12:4–6a

For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us. . . .

Sing

"We Are One," VU 402

"In Christ There Is No East or West," VU 606

"Blest Be the Tie That Binds," VU 602

Reflect

- How do the ways we think and believe affect what we do?
- Who do we welcome, and who do we find challenging to welcome?
- What role does fear play in judgment and exclusion?

Pray

At a Gathering

For everyone present today, we give you thanks, gracious God. For the scope of talent and ability here, we are grateful. We are blessed to have this community. As we gather, make us mindful of those outside these walls. Draw our awareness to those who confront barriers of all kinds. Encourage us to find ways to remove obstacles to the grace and belonging we witness in Jesus. We're here to make a difference, to make your mission our life's work. May it be so. Amen.

For Personal Devotion

Remove my fear of vulnerability,
O Great One.
Slow down my judgment.
Erase my urge to label and limit.
Embed your Spirit into the heart of my fear
so that uniqueness excites me,
so that diversity enralls me,
so that welcome guides me.
Let me be changed. Strengthened.
Blessed to be a blessing. Amen.

"I want to be seen as someone who can give back. Many people think of the issue of disabilities as people who suffer. It's social exclusion of people that leads to injustice."

—Lynda

Every Person Is a Superhero: **Esbikenh's Story**



We all have superpowers. Generosity is one of them. But did you know that the power of generosity through Mission & Service supports real-life superheroes?

Esbikenh was once a junior kindergarten teacher. While he grew up knowing his ancestral language, Anishinaabemowin (pronounced *Ah-nish-nah-BEM-win*), sadly the children he taught didn't. "One day I turned on YouTube and saw superhero videos. I thought, 'Why not make these videos and we will just have all the superheroes speak in Anishinaabemowin?'" says Esbikenh.

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action include reclaiming, revitalizing, strengthening, and maintaining Indigenous languages. This is critical for cultural revitalization. It's also important because when people are able to speak their ancestral language, self-understanding and self-esteem grows, health improves, and the sense of connection and relationships with others flourishes. Knowing how important learning Anishinaabemowin is to the children he once taught, Esbikenh

***"Chee meegwetch to everyone
who donated to Mission & Service
for making this project possible."
—Esbikenh***

applied for a project grant from the United Church. The Healing Fund, which is nearly entirely funded through Mission & Service, addresses the ongoing impacts of the residential school system.

With financial support secured, Esbikenh's filming has begun. When the videos are finished, they will be used as an educational resource for teachers, parents, and anyone who wants to learn the Anishinaabemowin language.

Ashley Riley, the librarian and arts coordinator at Antler River Elementary School of Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Ontario, plays a starring role in the films. She describes the systemic oppression of Indigenous peoples in Canada that results

in the loss of language, among other things. Ashley's mother is a residential school survivor, and because she wasn't allowed to speak her language at school Ashley didn't learn it growing up. "We weren't allowed to speak our own languages. We weren't allowed to be who we were. We weren't allowed to practise our own ceremonies. My mother grew up thinking



Photos: The United Church of Canada

the language wasn't that important. She's slowly learning now. She says a prayer every morning in her own language. I'm hoping the community will get involved in creating more language videos," Ashley says.

Why did Ashley decide to participate in the video project? She believes each one of us has the power to make a difference. "Every single person is a superhero. Every single person has a gift to share with the world. I think the most important thing is realizing the gift you can bring to your community," she says.

Through Mission & Service, your generous gifts help repair harm and extend hope. Please support the vital, healing work we do together. We can do much more together than we ever could alone. Thank you!

Listen

Mark 4:37–41

A great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that the boat was already being swamped. But he was in the stern, asleep on the cushion; and they woke him up and said to him, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"

Sing

"I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me," VU 575

"Though Ancient Walls," VU 691

"Live into Hope," VU 699

Reflect

- What kind of "superpowers" did Jesus have, and how did he use them?
- What was the impact of Jesus' healing, loving, and justice-seeking superpower?
- What spiritual superpower do you have, and how can you use it to make a difference?

Pray

At a Gathering

Powerful God, everything is possible when we are grounded in your Spirit. We can take responsibility for our past actions and promote healing. We can take a stand against injustice and work toward the common good. We can use all of our gifts—our time, talent, and treasure—to help build a better world. Buoy us with your mighty grace as we come together today. Empower us to make a difference. Amen.

For Personal Devotion

O God,
My thoughts have power.
My words have power.
My actions have power.
My interactions have power.
I have power, O God.
Help me use it wisely.
Amen.

Thank You for Believing: **Arwa's Story**



We all need someone who believes in us. Someone who supports our dreams. When you give to Mission & Service, you are that someone. Here's one story of how your belief and support make all the difference.

Three years ago, Arwa was a Palestinian refugee who had just arrived in Montreal. She had made a harrowing journey, travelling from Saudi Arabia through New York City with three children in tow.

"It wasn't easy for me. I was a single mom in a new country with new people. I was struggling for housing and looking for a job. It wasn't easy at all," she says.

Arwa sought help at Montreal City Mission, an outreach ministry your Mission & Service gifts support. There, her whole family found belonging. Arwa's children made friends, and she benefitted from training programs and events.

It wasn't long before Arwa gathered a group of women together to form a catering cooperative called Women Weaving Their Dreams, which specializes in homemade Middle

"I hope to see more and more women getting the same chance to have this better life for their families." —Arwa

Eastern meals. The group was going strong and the women were becoming more financially secure when COVID-19 struck.

No stranger to hardship, Arwa was determined to help others through the pandemic. She initiated a sewing circle to make masks. The group made over 500 masks a week and distributed them to homeless shelters and frontline workers. “I was so happy to help people,” says Arwa, whose extraordinary leadership skills landed her a full-time job at Montreal City Mission.



Photos: p. 22 Arwa Nofal; p. 23 The United Church of Canada

“I consider myself a lucky person that I got to know this organization. It has become not only my full-time job, not only my provider. It has become my home. I hope to see more and more women getting the same chance to have this better life for their families,” she says. “I wanted a country that could hold me and hug me my whole life long. I found it in Canada.”

Your gifts through Mission & Service don't just support dozens of organizations like Montreal City Mission across the country. They also support people's dreams for a better life—amazing people who make their communities and our country stronger.

Please give generously through Mission & Service. Show incredible community leaders like Arwa that you believe in them. Thank you for your support.

Listen

Jeremiah 29:11–12

For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you.

Sing

"Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness," VU 375

"Be Thou My Vision," VU 642

"I Am the Dream," MV 106

Reflect

- Who has believed in you? What impact did that belief have on your life?
- If God's dream for the world were to materialize today, what do you think would change or stay the same?
- How is Mission & Service rooted in believing in someone and in God's dream for the world?

Pray

At a Gathering

Loving God, our sacred story promises a future with hope. As we meet today, show us the role we, your people, play in embodying that hopeful future and seeing it in everyone we meet. Align us with your dreams for our lives and our world. Turn us toward potential. Instill in us a deep oneness with your divine mission. Let your love be our guide. Amen.

For Personal Devotion

Mine, O God, is a mission of hope.

Mine, O God, is a mission of peace.

Mine, O God, is a mission of love.

For I believe hope, peace, and love are hallmarks of your mission, O God.

Today, I recommit myself to join anew your mission with a hopeful, peaceful, loving heart.

Amen.

"I consider myself a lucky person that I got to know this organization. It has become not only my full-time job, not only my provider. It has become my home." —Arwa



The Incredible Difference Your Gifts Make: **Bill's Story**

None of us can go a single day without having an impact on someone's life. And we can't always predict how what we do to help change a life might wind up changing ours, too.

Take Bill Darnell. Bill's love affair with nature began at camp, but it didn't end there. Far from it. Bill's childhood experience of camp wound up inspiring one of the world's most influential environmental movements.

"Camping had a big effect on me. I grew up in suburbia and didn't have much access to the natural world. Camping was an opportunity to go out and be in nature. It was amazing. Being at camp solidified my strong connection with the natural world," he says.

Bill's early camp experience instilled such a love of nature that when he became an adult, he became an environmental activist. "When I was 25 years old, not far removed from my years in camp, I saw that they were testing nuclear weapons. That was so obviously wrong that I felt I had to do something to stop it," he says.

"Camping made an incredible difference in my life.... I give thanks to those who support it through Mission & Service."

—Bill

So Bill and a small group of friends anxiously climbed on board an 85-foot fishing boat later dubbed *Greenpeace*. Together, they set sail for Alaska to stop the testing of a nuclear bomb. Greenpeace as a movement was born.

Bill's story proves that camping experiences in childhood can lead to a lifelong commitment to care for God's creation.

As scientists and activists sound the alarm around climate change and experts report that not spending enough time outside is having an impact on our children's health and well-being, outdoor ministry has never been more crucial. It's just one of the many reasons why Mission & Service really matters.

Your Mission & Service gifts support over two dozen United Church-run camps across the country. Every year, your generosity gives thousands of children an opportunity to go to camp. There, they learn life skills, meet other campers, explore faith, and spend time outside.

Like Bill, some young people may leave camp so impressed by the natural environment that they get on board a movement to take care of it. "Camping made an incredible difference in my life. I know it will make an incredible difference to young people across Canada. I give thanks to those who support it," Bill says.

Please make a gift to Mission & Service today. Your support not only makes a difference right now but also has an impact on the future for all of us who are blessed to live in the beautiful world God created.



Photos: Bill Darnell

Listen

Matthew 14:19–20

Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full.

Sing

"Where Cross the Crowded Ways of Life,"

VU 681

"We Cannot Own the Sunlit Sky (Abundant Life)," MV 143

"O Beautiful Gaia," MV 41

Reflect

- Describe a time when generosity has multiplied like the loaves and fish in Matthew's story.
- The meal recounted in Matthew's story takes place outside. Where in creation is your spirit fed?
- Consider a time when something good you have done or been a part of has had a remarkable outcome.

Pray

At a Gathering

O God, place generosity at the centre of our gathering. Let us be generous in our outlook, generous in our decisions, and generous with each other. If our thinking gets too small, too narrowly focused on ourselves, remind us again of your mission to love large. Call up for us the image of Jesus making a meal for thousands out of a small offering. Turn us from our tightly held can'ts toward the good we can do when we come together in your way. Amen.

For Personal Devotion

God, break open the kernel of every good thing I do, however small.

Scatter my generosity around your beautiful world.

Let my gratitude for all that I have take root.

Let it grow strong as wheat.

Bake it. Break it. Share it.

Make my life a sacrament, my offerings more than enough.

Amen.

Turning Hard Work into Hope Every Day: **Margaret's Story**



Hard work doesn't always pay off. Around the world, many people work hard and still can't feed their families. Your gifts through Mission & Service turn hard work into true hope for the future. Thanks to your support, resourceful people like Margaret Kagundu don't just survive but thrive.

Margaret and her children live in challenging conditions in Nyeri, Kenya. In an area of widespread poverty, families live in makeshift homes without running water and have very little access to healthcare. Disease is so rampant that the average woman like Margaret can expect to live just 30 years.

Margaret struggled to meet her family's basic needs before she received a micro-loan from a lending program called Jamii Imara (pronounced *Jam-ee EE-mara*), which your gifts support.

Wanting to improve her life, Margaret applied for a small, interest-free loan from Jamii Imara to lift herself out of poverty. She used it to purchase a home to rent out. With the rental income, she paid back the loan and then

***"I have progressed a lot.
I am no longer the way
I was before. I have educated
my children."
—Margaret***

applied for another. She has received and paid back many loans to date. Margaret now owns two rental homes and is a proud landlord. The income is helping her feed and educate her family.

Your support teamed up with Margaret's hard work means that Margaret's son is in high school today. Considering 90 percent of children living in poverty in Kenya don't finish grade 8, that's a remarkable achievement.

"I was granted 10,000 shillings four times. I have even started keeping goats that reproduce. I have educated my children," Margaret says.

The Jamii Imara project helps women like Margaret establish their businesses. Together, the businesswomen share best practices and help each other financially to survive difficult times.

"We help our fellow members. If one's husband is ill, we continue to help her. If one's child is ill, we contribute to help her," says Margaret. "There are many women who want to join the group because they see that I have progressed a lot. I am no longer the way I was before."

Supporting women like Margaret who are determined to change their lives is just one of the ways you are helping to turn hard work into hope every day. Make your Mission & Service gift today to help transform and save lives.



Photos: The United Church of Canada

Listen

Matthew 6:19–21

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Sing

“Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ,”

VU 468

“Oh a Song Must Rise (A Song Must Rise),”

MV 142

“Seek Ye First the Kingdom,” VU 356

Reflect

- What's the difference between storing up treasures on earth and storing up treasures in heaven?
- What do you consider “treasure”?
- Do you think it's true that where your treasure is, your heart is? Where is your heart now?

Pray

At a Gathering

Our sacred scripture reminds us that our heart is where our treasure is. O God, let us examine our values as we gather. Move us to invest our resources in what matters most. Make our collective mission to live out your call drive our discussions and decisions. Orient our minds to your abundant blessings, and turn our hearts to hope. Amen.

For Personal Devotion

If I'm going to store up anything, my God, let it be memories of occasions when I've loved fully;
let it be instances when I've forgiven or asked forgiveness;
let it be good times with friends and generous times with strangers;
let all that loving, forgiving, joyfulness, and generosity pile up;
let the heap of it reach the heavens, and me with it. Amen.

“We help our fellow members. If one's husband is ill, we continue to help her. If one's child is ill, we contribute to help her.”
—Margaret

Thank You

for Your Support
during the
COVID-19 Crisis!



Rice is distributed to people in need in the Philippines.
Photo: Cordillera Disaster Response Network

In 2020, your Mission & Service gifts:

- helped people at home and abroad struggling to put food on the table for their families
- ensured those who are most vulnerable receive medical care and personal protective equipment
- supported those who struggle with addiction and mental health issues to access counselling services
- created networks of support for young people whose rhythms and relationships are disrupted because of the virus
- provided emotional and spiritual care for those in hospital and their families as well as medical staff

These are just some of the concrete ways your reliable support through Mission & Service has already made a huge difference during this crisis. Your ongoing support will continue to go directly to those who are most impacted by the pandemic at home and around the world.

Thank you so much!



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