# Mission and Service Stories: October‒December 2024

Mission and Service—helping transform lives, inspire meaning and purpose, and
build a better world.



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

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## Welcome to *Mission and Service Stories*!

*Mission and Service Stories* are for sharing with our faithful supporters to show them the amazing work their gifts make possible.

These stories can be used in services, in newsletters, and in face-to-face conversations. The more they’re shared, the more people will understand just how life-changing Mission and Service is!

For videos of some of the work you make possible, visit the [Mission and Service playlist](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLQDu-SgFb3RgRuLXGcT2-DvK8VeECsVdv) on our YouTube channel.

We hope this resource is helpful and inspiring.

As always, we would **love to hear your feedback**. Drop us a line at ms@united-church.ca and let us know what you like, what we can improve on, and what we can focus on developing.

Blessings,

The Philanthropy Team

## October 6: Our Journey towards Becoming an Anti-Racist Church

From October 15 to November 26, 2024, the 40 Days of Engagement on Anti-Racism program offers daily and weekly opportunities for learning, reflection, and action.

This year, dynamic speakers will be offering live events each Tuesday of the 40 Days at 7:00 p.m. Eastern Time. Small study groups will accompany each event, giving learners and leaders the opportunity to explore the content more deeply.

The program, designed to move people through a journey towards becoming anti-racist, offers an opportunity for participants within the United Church and beyond to engage in learning and develop their faith.

Written reflections explore internalized racism, systemic racism, anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism, and more. The readings encourage deep, thought-provoking discussion for both individuals and communities of faith.

The United Church of Canada has committed to becoming an anti-racist denomination, and this work is an ongoing journey for everyone. Your [Mission and Service](https://united-church.ca/community-and-faith/get-involved/mission-and-service) gifts support expanding this crucial initiative each year.

## October 13: What’s for Thanksgiving Dinner?

Thanksgiving is a time when many of us come together with loved ones, enjoying the abundance of food that graces our tables. It’s a time that reminds us of the blessings we have received. Yet, as we give thanks for our own blessings, it’s important to remember that many others, both here in Canada and around the world, are struggling with food insecurity. Your generous support through Mission and Service is making a difference by helping feed thousands of people in need.

One of the programs your Mission and Service gifts support is Food for the North, which serves Canada’s most remote northern communities. Food is not just scarce there but also incredibly costly. According to the federal government, back in 2019, the average Canadian family of four spent an average of $1,000/month on groceries. But in Nunavut, that same family would have to spend $1,600/month to get the same amount of food. And that was five years ago—imagine how much worse things are now! Your contributions ensure that these families have access to affordable and nutritious food, changing lives and offering hope in a time of growing need.

This Thanksgiving, as you gather with your family, please know how deeply grateful we are for your support. Your [gifts through Mission and Service](https://united-church.ca/donate) extend far beyond your own table, reaching into the homes of those who would otherwise go without. Together, we are not just providing meals—we are sharing the love and compassion of our faith with those who need it most. Thank you for making such a profound impact. Have a blessed Thanksgiving.

## October 20: An Abundance of Blessings in a Time of Need

With your generous support, many Canadian seniors who might otherwise face empty plates this season are able to enjoy nutritious meals and maintain their dignity throughout the year.

The Food Security for Elders program relies on your support to provide grocery cards to Indigenous Elders in the Morley First Nation and Lethbridge, AB area, where access to healthy food is limited. Without your support, these seniors face the harsh reality of choosing between essential needs and nourishing meals. They need your help to ensure their tables are filled with the food they deserve.

In a time of rising grocery prices and economic challenges, your kindness ensures that our most vulnerable neighbours are not left to struggle with food insecurity. Your gifts help transform their experience from one of worry and scarcity to one of comfort and nourishment. With your support, Elders can enjoy healthier meals and maintain their well-being.

Your generosity through [Mission and Service](https://united-church.ca/community-and-faith/get-involved/mission-and-service) gives more than just food; it offers hope and a sense of community. As we continue through our seasons of gratitude, we extend our heartfelt thanks to you for making such a significant impact. Thank you.

## October 27: Hope and Transformation

In a part of El Salvador where the climate is harsh and mining projects have impacted the environment, the Association of Economic and Social Development Santa Marta (ADES) is making a remarkable difference. Partnered with Mission and Service, ADES has launched a transformative agroecology project, bringing hope to rural farmers.

This initiative is centred at the Dora Alicia Sorto School Farm. Here, rural families—primarily led by women—learn sustainable farming practices that recycle nutrients into the soil, protect biodiversity, and reduce production costs.

Thanks to your generous gifts, this project can equip farmers with training, technical expertise, and native seeds, all while promoting environmental stewardship and gender equality. In a region affected by increasing droughts and disrupted agricultural patterns, these new methods help farmers adapt and thrive.

Your support has the power to extend to communities facing severe challenges. By contributing to this project, you are not just providing food; you are also empowering families to grow more, sustain their land, and secure their futures.

Thank you for supporting projects like this through [Mission and Service](https://united-church.ca/community-and-faith/get-involved/mission-and-service). Your gift ensures that others can look forward to a future where their tables are full.

## November 3: Accompanying Young Adults Through Transformative Years

*We would like to share a wonderful thank-you letter we received from the Ecumenical Campus Ministry (ECM) at the University of Guelph, a Mission and Service partner located in Guelph, ON. We're sharing it with you with deep gratitude for your generosity.*

“Thanks to support from United Church Mission and Service, the Ecumenical Campus Ministry at the University of Guelph has been able to support the UofG community and accompany young adults during some of the most transformative years of their lives.

The Ecumenical Campus Ministry has been a partnership of the Anglican, Presbyterian, and United Church at UofG since 1968. The chaplaincy is fully supported by alumni, parents, and grants from partner churches—the university does not fund faith programming.

Over the 2023/24 academic year, ECM was able to serve 25 free meals to university students, provide weekly worship services right on campus, conduct field trips to 10 local churches, hold 3 public presentations on issues of faith and inclusivity, mentor 5 student leaders, host 2 different weekend retreats, and coordinate the Queer Christian Community for 2SLGBTQIA+ students at UofG. This just scratches the surface!

This kind of ministry presence is made possible because of ECM’s vision of having a full-time chaplain, something that would be unthinkable without support from United Church Mission and Service.

So from all the students at UofG, thank you for your gifts to United Church [Mission and Service](https://united-church.ca/community-and-faith/get-involved/mission-and-service)! Your support is making a difference in the lives of young adults at the University of Guelph.”

To see our Mission and Service in action, watch the [2023/24 Ecumenical Campus Ministry highlight video](https://youtu.be/wkpEcJ3Mqmo?si=rZWWVwn_WRo9UW41).

## November 10: Overcoming Obstacles

Sue, 61, has faced a lifetime of challenges, starting in her youth when her mother was involved with organized crime and jailed for fraud. Later, as a young mom, a car accident left Sue with chronic back pain. And last fall, a fire destroyed her Hamilton apartment, forcing her onto the streets. Despite these struggles, Sue has found stability at Mission and Service partner Wesley. In Wesley’s special care unit, Sue is working to overcome the drug addiction that she has lived with since she was 11. While the process has been difficult, she is slowly reducing her drug use with the help of prescribed medications and support from Wesley’s staff.

The care unit operates under a harm reduction model, allowing clients like Sue to manage their addictions in a supported environment. Wesley’s program is part of a broader effort in Hamilton to address homelessness and substance use. Recently, the program expanded its capacity, and now provides about 30 beds for individuals struggling with multiple substances. Clients are not expected to quit drugs immediately but are supported in stabilizing their lives, receiving medical care, and reconnecting with family. Wesley’s team includes doctors, nurses, and addiction specialists who help clients find their own path to recovery.

For Sue, this support has been transformative. Her room at Wesley provides a much-needed sanctuary, offering a reprieve from the constant stress of homelessness and addiction. She continues to focus on her recovery, working in the garden and taking steps toward quitting fentanyl altogether. Sue dreams of eventually finding her own home and reuniting with her beloved cat, Kitty Cat, who was rescued from the fire and is being cared for by a friend.

Your gifts through [Mission and Service](https://united-church.ca/community-and-faith/get-involved/mission-and-service) help support people like Sue on her ongoing journey to build a better future for herself and her children. Thank you for your continued support.

Sue’s story was recently featured in The Hamilton Spectator. [Read more about Sue’s story](https://wesley.ca/sues-story-healing-trauma/).

## November 17: Supporting Community Resilience in Zimbabwe

In Zimbabwe, severe drought and food shortages continue to take a toll on communities, but the Zimbabwe Council of Churches is leading efforts to provide support. In partnership with Mission and Service and the Canadian Foodgrains Bank, the Scaling Up Resilience Project focuses on practical, long-term solutions. By emphasizing climate-smart farming, gender equality, and community-driven initiatives, the project is helping families strengthen their resilience and work towards a more secure future.

The challenges facing Zimbabwe are immense, with frequent droughts, unpredictable rains, tropical cyclones, economic instability, and outbreaks of diseases like cholera all contributing to severe food insecurity. In the Bikita and Gutu districts, up to 60% of people are affected, with many families struggling to put food on the table, send their children to school, and are at risk of gender-based violence. Crop failures, especially due to El Niño, have worsened conditions, leaving communities in urgent need of solutions.

The Scaling Up Resilience Program addresses these issues by building on the success of previous humanitarian efforts. It will provide training in gender-sensitive, climate-smart agriculture, strengthen disaster risk management systems, and revive essential community assets, such as water conservation works and irrigation schemes. By promoting gender equality, supporting financial resilience through savings and loans programs, and ensuring that all community members, including the elderly and those with disabilities, are included, the project is creating a brighter future for thousands of people.

Your gifts through [Mission and Service](https://united-church.ca/community-and-faith/get-involved/mission-and-service) have provided crucial support to partners like the Zimbabwe Council of Churches as they work toward a secure and sustainable future. Your continued support is deeply appreciated.

## November 24: Gifts with Vision: A Gift to All

“I have everything I need.”

“I can’t think of anything I want.”

“No gifts for me this year.”

This is something many of us have heard, and maybe something we’ve found ourselves saying. And while it may be true, despite not wanting or needing anything, we know gifts are going to happen anyway. Instead of searching “gifts for someone who is hard to buy for,” why not give [Gifts with Vision](https://giftswithvision.ca/)?

[Gifts with Vision](https://giftswithvision.ca/) is a way to give gifts from the comfort of home, with no packaging or wrapping needed. Instead of gadgets and fleeting trends, Gifts with Vision is full of gifts that will help transform lives throughout Canada and around the world. When placing your order, you’ll be able to add an e-card, including a delivery date, for each gift.

Every Gift with Vision provides support for a specific Mission and Service partner offering a unique project. Without Mission and Service, [Gifts with Vision](https://giftswithvision.ca/) projects would not be possible. Thank you for supporting both.

When Christmas rolls around, remember that a meaningful gift is a simple click away. If madly dashing around the mall on Christmas Eve has been your gift-buying style, kick back and relax. Gifts with Vision has you covered!

## December 1: Nurturing New Beginnings

Becoming a new parent can be overwhelming, with the constant demands of caring for a newborn, sleepless nights, and the pressure to make the right choices for your child. The exhaustion and balancing daily responsibilities while navigating the unknowns of parenthood often leaves new parents feeling unsure and isolated. It’s a time filled with great joy, but also uncertainty, as parents adjust to their new roles and work to create a safe and nurturing environment for their little one.

At Fairview Resource Centre in Halifax, Nova Scotia, the New Parents Support group aims to walk with parents as they navigate the complexities of raising a newborn. Once a week, parents gather to meet with a public health nurse who provides education and answers questions. From expectant parents to those with babies up to 18 months, the program provides resources for those who might not otherwise have access to in-person support or resources.

Parents connect not only with health professionals, but form deep bonds with each other, and some are still in contact many years later. Many of us have heard that “it takes a village to raise a child,” and Fairview Resource Centre is truly taking action to give a positive space for children in the community to flourish. Thank you for walking alongside our Mission and Service partners as they help children and communities grow.

Your support of [Mission and Service](https://united-church.ca/mission-and-service-old) is vital to the continuation of incredible programs like these.

## December 8: Helping Refugees

This past year, Wesley supported over 1,000 newcomers from Syria, Afghanistan, Ukraine, and other countries.

This is the story of one family of refugees.

Christine is a courageous and resilient mother who has been through unspeakable danger and sorrow to ensure the safety and success of her family. Christine, her children, and her grandchildren can teach us about self-sacrifice, endurance, and dedication to those we love. Initially from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Christine and her family fled to a refugee camp in Zimbabwe after a violent attack in their village. They lived through deplorable conditions and danger for ten years before finally being granted asylum in Canada.

When Christine and her family arrived in Canada, they were exhausted and emotionally drained from their long journey and years of unrest. Their first stop was Wesley’s Newcomer Reception Centre, where they found support from Wesley staff and a comfortable place to rest. With the help of Wesley’s programs and services, the family is rebuilding their lives in the Hamilton region.

Christine’s dream for her children and grandchildren is to have a safe and bright future filled with opportunities. Thanks to the generosity of donors like you, Wesley can provide supportive programs to newcomers, those experiencing homelessness, addiction and mental health barriers, and local families experiencing poverty.

With your support of [Mission and Service](https://united-church.ca/mission-and-service-old), we can change lives.

## December 15: Giving Gifts with Vision

It’s almost Christmas, and time seems to really fly at this time of year. If you still have someone on your list, instead of searching “last-minute gift ideas,” why not try Gifts with Vision?

With Gifts with Vision, you can give meaningful gifts without the stress of packaging or last-minute mall dashes. Every gift helps transform lives across Canada and around the world. With gifts in categories such as addressing poverty and hunger, healing and reconciliation, and education, there is truly something for everyone.

Each Gift with Vision supports a unique Mission and Service project that wouldn’t be possible without your help.

So, this Christmas, skip the rush—[Gifts with Vision](https://giftswithvision.ca/) is just a click away!

## December 22: A Place to Thrive

For some, Beasley Community Center is just a building to pass while driving down Wilson Street in Hamilton, Ontario. For others, Beasley is a sanctuary, a safe place where they can truly be themselves and thrive. For Cyris, Beasley’s meaning and purpose have gone through many seasons of change, starting as a young child and continuing today as he works as a summer student with the After School Program.

In 2010, when Cyris was nine years old, Dr. J. E. Davey Elementary School and the connected Beasley Community Center opened. Here, he attended Wesley’s after-school program and recreational drop-ins almost daily. Programs run by Wesley gave Cyris a place to spend his afternoons with his friends, particularly on the basketball court. “I loved being at Wesley. It gave me a place to be where I felt safe and comfortable,” says Cyris. “I got in trouble in school a lot; it was somewhere I could just play and not think about the stuff going on at home or at school.”

It was at Beasley that Cyris’ natural drive to help others began to flourish into a fierce dedication to serving his community in meaningful ways. “I love being in my community,” he proudly states.

Now, Cyris is 22 years old, and is attending the University of Ottawa to study Criminology with a goal of becoming a police officer. With this career, he feels he can give back and make a positive difference in his community while working in his hometown of Hamilton. When his school break rolls around, you can find him right back at Beasley working as a summer student at the same after-school program he participated in. “I love working with the kids, interacting with them, inspiring them, helping them,” he says.

When asked about what motivates him to help others and work with kids, Cyris credits the influence of the mentors he had at Beasley and his mother, who has spent her life working with young children. He had older friends who started working at Wesley. In high school, while he was still attending the recreational drop-in programs, he decided that he would follow their lead.

“I love helping people; that’s my biggest motivation,” he says. With the kids at Beasley, “it’s a full-circle moment, I was them at one point. Now I can help provide the support I had, and it feels pretty cool.”

Through his work at Beasley, Cyris hopes to help the children he mentors see that they, too, can overcome obstacles and achieve their dreams. “Just follow your dreams, do what you want to do, do what makes you happy,” he reminds them often.

Cyris’ work helping others is far from over, and he hopes the kids he works with find their own versions of success and that some will return to help when they’re older. He’ll be there too—“I’ll always be around. I can’t see myself not being here. I’ll keep my hand in it somehow. I love it here.”

Your gifts to [Mission and Service](https://united-church.ca/mission-and-service-old) support programs that help children and young adults grow and thrive. Thank you.

## December 29: A Time of Reflection

As we look forward to the New Year and all the hope and possibility 2025 will bring, it’s also a time to reflect on the growth we experienced in 2024. Through moments of peace and challenge, joy and sorrow, it has been a true blessing to witness God at work through people like you.

Amid earthquakes, conflict, economic struggles, hunger, and more, you have consistently asked, “How can we help?” Thank you for holding our neighbors in warm, compassionate care throughout a challenging year. Together, you have helped put food on tables, rebuild communities after disasters, provide life-saving medication, educate children, and so much more.

Your gifts continue to support our partners as they respond to urgent needs in Canada and around the world, bringing hope and breaking down barriers so that they can keep doing their vital work. As we reflect on this past year and welcome the new one, we are deeply grateful for your support of [Mission and Service](https://united-church.ca/community-and-faith/get-involved/mission-and-service). Thank you for bringing hope to so many.