

Mission and Service Prayer Resource June 7- June 28, 2009 Year B

This is the final segment for the Mission and Service Prayer Resources for this year. However, the work of the Mission and Service Fund continues on your behalf. The financial assistance continues to flow to those local ministries within Toronto Conference we support. The national office continues to co-ordinate the network that keeps us together as the United Church of Canada. Our national office also continues to work with our partners around the world to support global initiatives for justice, peace, and gender equality. When urgent issues arise, we are ready to respond.

Because the work of the Mission and Service Fund continues during the summer, it remains important to lift up the good work that is done through your financial support.

Please feel free to re-use any segments from the previous year or consider highlighting our new presbyteries, or our new presbytery and conference staff. Remember also that our United Church Camps are in full swing providing spiritual opportunities for our children, youth and families.

Blessings to you and your ministry during this time of re-creation.

Sunday June 7, 2009
Isaiah 6:1-8; Psalm 29; Romans 8:12-17; John 3: 1-17
Trinity Sunday, Environment Sunday,
84th Anniversary of Church Union
Week for Peace in Palestine and Israel

What were some of the issues of the day at the inauguration of the United Church in 1925? During its 84 year history, how has the church lived out Isaiah's words "Here am I: send me"? How do those words reflect the work of these ministries that are supported by the Mission and Service Fund?

The Earth Charter is a multi-faith and cross-cultural educational tool to engage people in dialogue and action in order to bring about a sustainable future. The charter was endorsed by the 38th General Council of the United Church of Canada and recommended its study in UCC congregations. The charter touches on issues of peace, justice and the environment. The goal is to bring people together to the common focus of creating truly just and sustainable communities living in harmony with the wider earth community.

Faith and the Common Good is an interfaith project that has developed the **Renewing the Sacred Balance** initiative. If you go to their website, you will find material to enrich sermons, or material for small group study such as the **Greening Sacred Spaces** programme.

This week is set aside to focus on Peace for Israel and Palestine. In addition to the petitions that UCC congregations were invited to sign and that were delivered to Ottawa, the United Church works for peace in the region in many other ways.

Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Centre is one of our global partners in the Middle East that works towards peaceful solutions in this troubled region. It is an ecumenical grassroots liberation theology movement among Palestinian Christians. The Centre offers programmes for women, youth, and the community responding to issues of isolation, lack of information, and the resulting feelings of hopelessness and despair. They also try to ensure that the global community is being given an accurate image of the tenuous situation in the region and particularly for the minority Christian community.

The Sabeel Centre is located in Jerusalem, serving Bethlehem, Ramallah and the surrounding areas, with a branch office in Nazareth, serving the Galilee.

Give Thanks for the decision of the United Church to adopt the Earth Charter and endorse it as a study resource for our congregations. **Give Thanks** that amidst the unsettled situations in Israel and Palestine, the church continues to work for peace in the region and stand in solidarity with those affected by war.

Celebrate the vision of those who seek to build a world in which people from all walks of life work together to build sustainable and peaceful communities in harmony with nature. **Celebrate** the work of God's Spirit among the leaders of Sabeel, guiding their work and sustaining their courage during these tenuous times.

Pray for the spread of the commitment of individuals, faith groups and other community organizations to the values and goals of the Earth Charter. **Pray** for resolve among all the people in Israel and Palestine to continue to find a peaceful and just resolution to the ongoing hostilities.

June 14, 2009
2nd after Pentecost
1 Samuel 15:34-16:13; Psalm 20; 2 Corinthians 5:6-10; 14-17
Mark 4:26-34

Think of a time when the plans you made in anticipation of a particular outcome resulted in a change of direction that brought a totally unexpected yet wonderful result. How was the Spirit at work in that change of direction? How has the Spirit been at work in these ministries that are supported by the Mission and Service Fund?

The Korean Association brings together clergy and lay people from the Korean United Churches across Canada. In addition to being a vital support network for its members, it also helps to maintain the Korean culture within its worship and translate resources into Korean for congregational use. Our Korean congregations and intercultural congregations are a joyful blessing that has arisen from our long association with the church in Korea. Who could have imagined when our missionaries first began their work in Korea that we would one day be blessed with an infusion of Korean faith and commitment into our church, and benefit from the leadership and wisdom of the Very Rev. Dr. Sang Chul Lee as our Moderator from 1988 to 1990? The Association of Korean Congregations is composed of 13 pastoral charges in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec. Rev. Steve Willey is the national staff person who liaises with the Korean Association and supports the work of this ministry.

The Korean Christian Church is one of our global partners. Located in North Korea, it symbolizes one of the connections we have that currently assist those Christians living in North Korea. The Korean Christian Church is represented on the World Council of Churches by the **Korean Christian Federation**. According to their statistics there are approximately 10,000 protestant church members and 5,000 Roman Catholic members. They see their primary work as promoting efforts for the unification of North and South Korea. They also train clergy at Pyongyang Divinity School established in 1972, and have a Missionary Association of Korean Women. In addition to offering public worship at the few churches they have, they connect personally with people in their homes. Although religious freedom is acknowledged, the church continues to struggle in a difficult political

environment. Still, the support we offer through the World Council of Churches gives hope for a better future. Some day, we may rejoice in surprising blessings from our Christian friends in North Korea that will enrich our own faith experience here in Canada.

Give Thanks for the support offered to our Korean congregations through the ministry of the Korean Association. **Give Thanks** for the presence of the church in North Korea.

Celebrate the surprising way in which the Spirit has blessed the United Church through the mission seeds planted many years ago. **Celebrate** the way seeds of hope continue to be planted and cultivated in North Korea.

Pray for the thirteen Korean congregations that offer a welcome place for worship, study and fellowship to newcomers and the growing number of second and third generation Koreans across Canada. **Pray** for the ongoing work of the Korean Christian Federation and for the people they serve.

Sunday June 21, 2009
3rd after Pentecost
1 Samuel 17:32-49; Psalm 9:9-20;
2 Corinthians 6:1-13; Mark 4:35-41
National Aboriginal Day of Prayer, First Nations Sunday

What kind of “storm” do you find most threatening? Reflect upon the aspects of faith needed to sustain you through the duration of the crisis. What faith lessons can we learn from the history of the Aboriginal people of Canada and Bolivia?

First Nations Sunday is an opportune time to lift up the many projects that the United Church has sponsored or supported as part of our journey to repair and heal the relationship between the United Church and our First Nations communities affected by the residential school system. Over the years, the United Church has been a vocal advocate for Aboriginal rights including First Nations self-government. We have supported and promoted the Sisters in Spirit Project, established to lobby the federal government to respond more diligently and effectively to violence toward Aboriginal women. But there is much more to be done in educating us about current issues affecting Aboriginal people and their communities as well as fully understanding the impact of historical wrongs in which the United Church was complicit. **The Healing and Reconciliation Fund** provides funding for events, projects or initiatives that bring Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people together to study, reflect and learn from each other’s stories. One such event was the Toronto Pine Tree Healing Circle Event that brought together members of Trinity-St. Paul’s United Church together with members of the Aboriginal Community in the surrounding neighbourhood. Part of the dialogue included a two-day healing circle at the Six Nations Reserve in Brantford.

Uniting Hands for Life (UMAVIDA) is one of our global partners in Bolivia. It is an ecumenical network of 12 churches and non-profit organizations working with the Bolivian people to establish a sustainable society through various initiatives. Since the 2005 election to power of an indigenous leader, Evo Morales, the country has nationalized the gas and oil reserves so that 80% of the profit from these industries is returned to the state. Indigenous language, culture and values are now protected and reflected in the new constitution. However, the many positive changes have not reached all of the poor areas. There is still a great need to help local people in their struggle for equality. Uniting Hands for Life is a partner in

that process. Read more about their work in the May edition of Mandate, pg. 17.

Give Thanks for the openness of Aboriginal communities to walk with us toward reconciliation for our participation in the Residential School experience that resulted in damaging and destroying the lives of so many Aboriginal children and their families. **Give Thanks** for the work of Uniting Hands for Life that continues to equip the poor and disenfranchised people of Bolivia to establish their own workable solutions for many ecological and social problems that threaten their way of life.

Celebrate the distance we have travelled on this journey of reconciliation and the understanding that has resulted from listening to our Aboriginal sisters and brothers. **Celebrate** the democratic reforms in Bolivia that are bringing new hope to indigenous people who have long suffered from political domination and oppression.

Pray that we will be guided toward a time when Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people will live together in communities founded on justice and equality and mutual respect. **Pray** that the progress made toward creating a society in Bolivia that respects all citizens, their culture and values continues until it is achieved.

June 28, 2009
4th after Pentecost
2 Samuel 1:1,17-27; Psalm 30; 2 Corinthians 8:7-15;
Mark 5:21-43

Recall a crisis in your life that, at the time, made you think “everything is lost.” Identify the experiences of grace that lifted you up from those feelings and set you on a new course. Reflect upon how these ministries might be such experiences of grace for those people they touch.

“Sharing Bread” Crisis Response Fund is a new initiative of the United Church established in response to the current economic situation. Its purpose is to support new projects or programmes that respond to the increased needs of individuals, households, neighbourhoods and communities most acutely affected. These programs may be a new initiative of an existing community ministry (including camps, campus ministries, seniors’ facilities, chaplaincies and outreach ministries) or included as part of a congregation’s community outreach. \$210,000.00 has been set aside for projects across Canada.

Since the current economic situation is global in nature, the fund will equally support similar initiatives through our global partners (\$210,000.00). An additional amount of \$80,000.00 is available to support the training of ministry staff to better equip them to offer leadership and pastoral care in these economically uncertain times.

The Centre for Development Studies is one of our global partners in India. You may know it by its Hindi name, Vikas Adhyayan Kendra (VAK). Already well established in community development projects, the Centre was therefore ready to respond to the sudden needs of the people following the tsunami of 2004. The tsunami totally wiped out communities and upset traditional work, especially fishing. Women were left without partners to sustain the family so now they must learn new skills and find jobs in a totally different environment. With the help of The Centre for Development Studies, (VAK) they have been trained for work as health-care workers, basket weaving, tailoring or establishing their own businesses. Some of the young women are becoming computer literate so that they are able to participate in the technology boom.

Give Thanks for the ability of the General Council to respond to the changing needs of outreach ministries in light of the financial downturn.

Give Thanks for the existence of The Centre for Development Studies and the network of global partners such as the United Church of Canada that positioned them to better respond to the ongoing needs of the tsunami survivors.

Celebrate the fact that the Mission and Service Fund has sufficient funds to respond to the urgent needs of our vulnerable communities. **Celebrate** the new life that has arisen for the people of India out of the ashes of despair of the tsunami thanks to the various education programmes of the Centre for Development Studies.

Pray for the most vulnerable people in our communities who are at greater risk during this financial downturn. **Pray** for the people of India who are rebuilding their lives and livelihoods with the help of VARK.