

Stewardship + Mission and Service = US!



Christmas Newsletter 2015 Montreal and Ottawa Conference

God's Mission and Our Gifts

I usually start my newsletters with references to the season but the terrorist events of Friday the 13th in Paris have put a deeper desire to act on those four words of Advent: hope, peace, joy and love. Every year we light candles as we prepare for the coming of Christ. More and more candles, more and more light, as we watch and wait for Jesus, the Light of the World.

Hope is a powerful force in our lives and Christmas brings hope, and hope can also get you through some very tough times in our lives. In the news casts about the attacks in Paris reporters often mentioned that this was the deadliest violence to strike Paris since World War II. During the Second World War there was a singer in England named Vera Lynn. Her songs helped lift the spirits of people confronted by the fury of war. She was a very bright light in a sometimes very bleak world. One of her songs was called "When the Lights Go On All Over The World." Which gave everyone hope that the war would soon be over and life would return to normal. The Second World War was a time of darkness. In so many ways the lights were out, darkness having descended upon the earth. Each night cities were in darkness, drapes drawn across the windows in every home so that no light might escape. This darkness was in a way an outward and visible sign of the spiritual, emotional and psychological darkness that enveloped the hearts, minds and spirits of millions of adults and children. This darkness ultimately was not able to crush the human spirit of those that lived through the war, just as the people of Paris have shown their strong spirit after the terrorist attacks of Friday the 13th. Right after the attacks the Eiffel Tower went dark as France mourned the deaths in Paris. In solidarity with Paris, global landmarks around the world lit up with the colours of the French flag, followed in a few days by the Eiffel Tower also in the colours of their flag: Signaling a beacon of new hope for not only Paris but the whole world.

Hope comes to us in many ways, like stories that have come out of Paris this past week:

A Paris man's powerful open letter of defiance to the terrorists who recently killed his wife during one of the attacks on the Bataclan concert hall is going viral on Facebook. Antoine Leiris post the letter titled "You Will Not Have My Hatred" to Facebook on Monday, less than three days after his 35-year-old wife of 12 years, Helen Muyal-Leiris, was killed, during the hostage taking at the concert hall in Paris on Friday the 13th. In the Facebook post, Leiris asserts that he and his 17-month-old son will continue to live unafraid and without hatred.

A young French boy's moving talk with his father about the Paris attacks was captured on camera. The boy, Brandon, and his father, Angel Le, were visiting a memorial outside the Bataclan concert hall to pay their respects to the victims when they were interviewed by French TV show *Le Petit Journal*. The reporter crouched down beside the boy, who is about five, and asked if he understood what had happened in Paris, and why the the gunmen had carried out their attacks.

Brandon replied: "Yes, because they're really, really mean. Bad guys are not very nice. And we have to be really careful because we have to change houses."

Le said they would not move because "France is our home."

Brandon: "But there's bad guys, daddy?"

Le: "Yes, but there are bad guys everywhere."

Brandon: "They have guns. They can shoot us because they're really, really mean daddy."

Le: "They might have guns, but we have flowers." He told his son the flowers and candles that had been laid outside the concert hall were to protect them, and to remember the victims.

Brandon then broke into a small smile before telling the reporter: "I feel better."

Le Petit Journal posted the footage on its Facebook page, and it was shared 380,000 times in less than a day. Mr Le posted a message on the media organisation's Facebook page, thanking people for their response. "When I see all this support, it tells me one thing: I'm proud to be French and proud of my fellow countrymen!!! My family and I kiss you," he wrote. The video has now been viewed 34 million times.

Or in these words from our United Church General Secretary

"Note from Nora" – Nora Sanders United Church General Secretary

As much as possible Nora Sanders sends out "Note from Nora" in response to events or seasons. Here is part of her note in response to the Paris terrorist attacks.

"Here in Canada, there have been a variety of responses to the fear that arises from events like this worldwide.

Some people have called for Canada to slow down on the process of bringing Syrian refugees into our country. Others have responded that those refugees are just people who are trying to get away from violence, terrorism, and war in their homelands.

Someone set fire to a mosque in Peterborough, and the police are investigating it as a hate crime. I was touched and grateful to see that churches in Peterborough, including Mark Street United Church, had reached out to offer their Muslim neighbours a place to worship while the mosque is being repaired. Others in that community have been using a crowd sourcing tool to raise money for those repairs.

In Toronto, after a Muslim woman in a hijab was attacked while picking her child up from school, Mayor John Tory went to the school the next day to reassure members of the community that this hate crime does not represent Toronto.

In the face of vicious acts of violence that target innocent people, we struggle to know what to do. It might be tempting to assume that these are problems for somewhere else, or for someone else, but we are all part of the world and the world's problems are our problems."

Sponsoring Syrian Refugees

The United Church of Canada has had a long history of supporting refugees because we have seen people driven out of their homes and countries before, we want to bring hope, peace, joy and love to Syrian refugees who haven't heard or felt those words for a long time. Wonderful stories are coming out of our faith communities and presbyteries in Montreal and Ottawa Conference who are in the process of bringing refugee families to Canada. Some are working with other denominations, religions or communities because we all have the capacity to "love our neighbour."

Faith communities and presbyteries have created 81 applications for which approximately \$1.8M has been raised or pledged for sponsorship.

Re-Issued Emergency Appeal for Syrian Refugees

The Moderator of The United Church of Canada, The Right Rev. Jordan Cantwell, is urging your participation in a church-wide appeal for Syrian refugees who are seeking relief from protracted civil war in their country. In her first letter as Moderator to the church's members, she writes:

We are called at this particular time to witness in a concrete way to our Christian faith in response to the needs of millions of desperate people seeking refuge and compassion. Please go to the United Church website www.united-church.ca or www.stewardshiptoolkit.ca to see how you can donate.

Prayer for the Syrian Refugees:

God of hope, peace, joy and love let our Advent lights spread into every shadowed corner of our world, so that Syrian Refugees may find a warm welcome, food for their bodies, shelter in which to rest from their journeys and bring hope for their futures. Warm our hearts and open our hands to do what we can to share in your work in the name of Jesus' who was once a refugee. Amen

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### **Called to Be the Church Congregational Giving Program**

In July you received at your churches the Called to Be the Church Congregational Giving 2015-16 Program Guide. Then in the middle of September you received the Resource Kit to go with the guide. These two items were a gift, a useful gift for yourself, your faith communities and your presbytery. This gift was delivered to the churches for free. With no strings attached, only the great desire for you to open this gift and use the material that is contained inside to make stewardship come alive for you, your congregations and your presbytery. This gift comes to you from the General Council Philanthropy Unit.

This *Called to Be the Church congregational giving package* was in response to requests for a easy and effective giving program, a gift that will work for congregations small and big. When you open this gift you will find that it provides ideas and resources for training, learning, as well as worship, Sunday School, and Youth materials, all in one place. for you to plan your congregational giving and stewardship programs for this next year.

As the United Church of Canada plans for the future and evolves, the General Council Philanthropy Unit is committed to providing faith communities with tools, advice, assistance and resources to help with this important activity in the life of our churches, Stewardship and Mission & Service.

We have many types of faith communities within our conference. Some have very strong stewardship committees, and some would like to develop stewardship within their congregations but do not know how to get started.

Focusing on stewardship is never easy when starting from square one, or looking for new ways to present Stewardship. That is why we have gathered together some resources that you will find useful in planning your stewardship program, narrative budget, or planned giving initiative.

I would be happy to work with you to use this resource kit for congregational giving so it would best serve the needs of your faith community. Carolyn Ruda [gordonruda@sympatico.ca](mailto:gordonruda@sympatico.ca) 613 932-2415

On the [United-in-learning](http://www.united-in-learning.com) website, will be a session on the Called to Be the Church resource kit. [www.united-in-learning.com](http://www.united-in-learning.com) All you need is a computer, internet connection, and a telephone.

December 1 at 1 pm is a chance to ask the ones that put together the program any questions you may have. This webinar is being offered free.

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Narrative Budgets

Most of the tools to get started on producing a Narrative Budget for your next Annual Report are in the Called to Be the Church Congregational giving Resource kit . If you want to think about doing a Narrative Budget for your next Annual Report now is a good time to start working on it.

You may have heard of Narrative Budgets before as churches are using them more and more. A very effective tool for inspiring congregational giving tells the story of your ministry through words and pictures. It shows how generosity impacts your community and empowers your people to work for God's mission in our world.

The time it takes to produce this critical resource is a real investment. (We estimate 12–15 hours.) Once the effort is made to produce your first Narrative Budget, you can update it annually with stories of the most recent year's accomplishments.

There are examples of Narrative Budgets on the United Church web-site www.stewardshiptoolkit.ca There you will find different styles submitted by several churches.

Paul Sales our Financial Development Officer for Montreal and Ottawa & Bay of Quinte Conferences has developed a workshop for those that wish to think about a Narrative Budget for your next Church Annual Report. psales@united-church.ca 613 841-9291.

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**Mandate Magazine**

The November issue of *Mandate Magazine* features articles on: *Reconciliation – What comes after the Truth and Reconciliation Commission?*

*Mandate* is a quarterly magazine for United Church faith communities, that is chock full of great ideas and information. *Mandate* provides tools for use in all areas of congregational life, including spiritual growth and discipleship formation, justice and advocacy, worship, stewardship, outreach, and Mission and Service awareness.

Its content includes:

- ✓ feature articles and short news items
- ✓ Bible study
- ✓ worship material
- ✓ workshop outlines for adult groups
- ✓ programs for leaders of children and youth
- ✓ stories from congregations of successful ventures

the Subscription Desk: Toll-free: 1-800-268-3781 Ext. 4024 Price: 1 year \$12.95

**Mission and Service the Heart and Soul of the United Church of Canada**

Mission and Service is a big part of who we are as a church. It is our grateful response to all that God has generously given to us. By making Mission & Service a part of our giving, we are each answering God's call for us to help our neighbour where ever, and who ever they may be.

For all of you who support and promote Mission and Service in your faith communities, thank you so much. Because you believe in the work made possible through your givings; hope, peace, joy and love are able to flourish in even the darkest times in people's lives. That is why I want to bring your attention to the fact that as a Conference our givings are down 3.2% from last year. I share this with you as I know that you want to make sure that the amazing work that is done by our Mission and Service partners will continue to happen. I know that you want a homeless person to find a warm bed for the night, a refugee will be given the support they need when they arrive in our country, that a family will be able to stretch their meager budgets with food from a food bank, and a University student will have a University Chaplain to turn to when life gets too much for them.

We are a church that lives out words like compassion, kindness, caring, equality and justice, a church that is there for all. Help us to continue to be that church, that Mission and Service.

To date Montreal and Ottawa Conference has given \$846,386 to Mission and Service. In 2014 at this date we had given \$874,601.

To check on your faith communities givings to Mission and Service go to [www.stewardshiptoolkit.ca](http://www.stewardshiptoolkit.ca) Under the column Donate now click on Mission and Service weekly givings update. Then under Pastoral Charge Reports 2015 click Montreal and Ottawa Conference.

## **Food Banks**

Interesting facts from *Food Banks Canada*, the only national charitable organization dedicated to helping Canadians who are hungry. They support a network of 10 Provincial Associations and more than 500 food banks. Together, their network assists close to 850,000 Canadians who turn to food banks each month, in Ontario that is \$358,963 people, and in Quebec \$163,152. Of those who need help, 37% —more than 310,000 a month — were children. Amongst those who have to turn to the food banks each month is the working poor, trying to raise children on minimum wages.

Just because you have a job it doesn't mean you're not poor. Many food bank clients hold down full-time and/or part-time jobs but still live in poverty. Minimum wage in Ontario is \$11.25, and in Quebec is \$10.35 per hour. Across Canada, 19% of people who used a food bank last year had a job.

*Food Banks Canada* focuses on three core areas:

1. raising food and funds;
2. delivering programs and services;
3. influencing policy through research, awareness raising, and advocacy.

*Food Banks Canada* does not receive money from Mission and Service, our connection is through some of our Mission and Service Partners who are members and David Armour of the General Council Philanthropy Unit is on the Board of Directors.

## **Mission and Service Partners Canadian Foodgrains Bank**

The Canadian Foodgrains Bank is providing assistance to some of the estimated four million people who have fled to safety in Lebanon and Jordan, as well as for people in Syria itself.

In Lebanon, one project provides food vouchers for 5,800 refugees who have depleted most of their savings. In Syria, another project provides 17, 500 people with monthly food boxes, while a second helps 3,500 displaced families. In Jordan, a project provides food for 500 families each month.

Altogether, through its members the Canadian Foodgrains Bank is implementing eight projects in the three countries.

Funds for such projects are being matched on a 4:1 basis through the Foodgrains Bank's agreement with the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD). Almost \$25 million in assistance has been programmed since 2012 for Syrians living in Lebanon and Jordan, and in Syria itself.

### ~~~~~ **Gifts with Vision**

Nicole Beaudry, Mission and Service Enthusiast at Bells Corners gave the following "Minute For Mission" on November 1<sup>st</sup> to introduce the new "Gifts with Vision" giving catalogue. I've printed it just as Nicole sent it to me, to give you ideas as to how you can promote this wonderful catalogue.

*"Right off the bat I am NOT making a commercial for Sears. Here are some quotes about the Sears catalogue, not that bulky one you had at your house all year, but the one we received in early fall: the "Wishbook"!*

*The Wishbook was a popular Christmas giving catalogue since 1933. It is said that the Sears Wishbook was considered as a holiday treat in itself by generations of children who were hoping for the best on Christmas morning. I was raised on the Wishbook.*

*I am here today to talk to you about another wishbook: The M&S Giving catalogue Gifts with Vision. The United Church of Canada developed this giving catalogue in response to member requests to be able to give gifts to relatives, friends, and loved ones that are in direct support of the church's Mission & Service partners across Canada and around the world.*

*If you are seeking inspiring new gift ideas or perhaps would rather not give family and friends the same old clothes/toys/chocolates, Gifts with Vision presents a new way to celebrate special occasions. Give a gift that can help change people's lives! Everyone will find something in Gifts with Vision worth sharing with the*

*special people in their lives. Gifts are available in a range of dollar amounts, as well as for many areas of need (hunger, shelter, education, health, safety, mobility, and more).*

*Christmas is a wonderful time to think about others and to express love for special people in our lives. Now you can do both with a Gift with Vision. Let your gift recipient know that you are both helping to change the world.*

*You will find the "Wish book" on the table in the Narthex and on the M&S bulletin board in the hallway. Ordering is easy. You will find all this information on the last page. You can use the website and purchase there, using your credit card. You can use the mail order form on the envelope found in the book, or you can order by phone. Gifts with Vision are perfect for group giving as well. Church committees, UCW groups, youth groups, and Sunday Schools can contribute to a collective Gift with Vision. The money raised by our Lenten project last year went to a partner featured in last year's book.*

*Please share the book or return it when you are finished with it.*

*Thanks to your generosity, Gift with Vision has now surpassed \$1 million in giving to United Church partners! Through these gifts, you can honour your loved ones and mark any special occasion throughout the year while supporting projects that mend the world. Gift funding raised for partners through the catalogue will be over and above the regular member-supported, stable core funding that these partners receive. Thank you and happy shopping!"*

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Remember:

- Please contact me when you have questions about either Stewardship or Mission and Service.
- Contact me if you feel you need more support in promoting both in your faith communities.
- Contact me if you would like me to speak about Stewardship or Mission and Service either on a Sunday morning or with a group.

My job is to be there for you! I look forward to hearing from you.

*Carolyn Ruda
Montreal & Ottawa Conference
Mission and Service Support
Chair, Conference Stewardship
gordonruda@sympatico.ca 613 932-2415*

*If you look for me at Christmas, you won't need a special star –
I'm no longer just in Bethlehem, I'm right there where you are.
You may not be aware of me amid the celebrations –
You'll have to look beyond the stores and all the decorations.
But if you take a moment from your list of things to do,
And listen to your heart, You'll find I'm waiting there for you.
You're the one I want to be with, you're the reason that I came,
And you'll find me in the stillness as I'm whispering your name.
Love, Jesus*

~ Jan Mahannah