

## JULY: Gifts that Change Lives

One of the greatest injustices of our day is gender inequality. Education is one of the keys to changing this. Larry Summers, former chief economist for the World Bank once said that "It may well be that the highest return on investment in the developing world is in girls' education". Providing an education for a daughter may seem useless to some parents or just unaffordable but through microloans and gifts of livestock, the lives of girls are being changed. One such girl is Beatrice living in an African country. She had never

been to school even for one day. Her opportunity to go to school however changed when an organization sent two goats to Africa and one of the goats was given to her parents. The goat gave birth to twins, the milk was sold for cash and when the money began to accumulate, her parents decided to send Beatrice to school at the age of nine. She soared to the top of her class through elementary, middle school and high school. She was the first person in her village to receive post secondary education. Upon her graduation from college

she said "I'm the luckiest girl alive because of a goat!" God has amazing ways to bring about hope and change. Let's pray: Lord, we are often overwhelmed by the injustice in our world. Show us creative ways we can use to bring about hope and change.

*Shirley DeMerchant is a WICC Council member.  
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## AUGUST: Refugees

They walk among us, these refugees, men and women, young and old. When you pass them on the street often their eyes are cast down offering only furtive glances that share only a glimpse of their stories. Some stories are filled with physical pain and loss; all are filled with grief and loneliness. They have fled the land of their ancestors and now inhabit our country, where we pray that they are safe from harm. Look with pity, O heavenly God, upon those who have come to our shores and who continue to

live with injustice, terror, disease and death as their constant companions. Have mercy upon us and help us to eliminate cruelty wherever it is found. We pray, O God of compassion, that those refugees whose hearts are breaking may find peace and comfort within your loving arms. Fill them with the certainty of your hope and the light of your Spirit and bring the gift of your compassion to all who meet them and strengthen those who seek equality for all. Grant that every one of us may enjoy a fair portion

of the abundance of this land. All of this we ask in the name of your most precious Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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## SEPTEMBER: Harvesting

Sustainable agriculture is becoming difficult for many farmers. The international community has pressed countries to have free markets thus allowing the 'dumping' of cheap produce that undermines local food production. According to the Karl Lévêque Cultural Institute this is what has happened in Haiti, who used to produce 123,000 metric tons of rice in 1986 and fell to about 90,000 two decades later. Before the earthquake of 2010, Haiti had to import 80% of their food. In Canada, urban sprawl is a major



problem, as well as fair market value. A Canadian farmer receives 12 cents from the sale of a loaf of bread. Some farmers have to hold other jobs in order to support themselves. Smaller farms have had to sell land to the big farming companies because their farms weren't viable. There is hope, though. Around the world. We see small subsistent farms and ecological farming practices. Co-operatives are helping women and their entire communi-

ties with education and micro-credit for subsistent farming projects. More people are participating in the 100-mile diet and cities are starting to plan growth with food production in mind.

As farmers bring in the harvest of their labours let us pray that we will be ever mindful that we are called to be good stewards and benevolent rulers of the earth (Genesis 1:28, 2:15). We pray for farmers the world over, that they will be guided to care for God's earth. We pray that there will be enough for all.

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## OCTOBER: Reconciliation

We are living in a time of conflict and war. How can we speak of reconciliation when there is no peace in Afghanistan, when the conflict in the Middle East threatens to escalate, when racism rears its ugly head and homophobia in our society has not been defeated?

Yet, the writer of 1 Corinthians 5 states that God reconciled the world and us to himself through Christ. Everything has been made new! God, who initiated the reconciliation process, has finished it.

The writer does not tell us how to exercise this ministry. Why? Did he think that we could figure that out by ourselves? He gives himself as an example: he entreats the Corinthians to be reconciled to God.

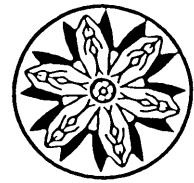
We ought to follow his example, living and working for reconciliation, for peace and justice in our families, our churches and our society, in politics and in the workplace. This is not an easy task, for wars continue. We live in a world of plenty, while millions of people

are afraid, hungry, sick and homeless.

Such injustice would make us doubt God's reconciliation. It is too paradoxical!

Christ taught his followers how to live with such a paradox. God's reign of peace and justice has come, but not in all its glorious fullness. But come it will for our reconciling God is faithful.

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## NOVEMBER: Peacemakers

Often, in our minds, we limit peacekeeping missions to the military who travel to war-torn countries to calm troubled waters in life-threatening situations. But truly, each of us is called to be a peacemaker. One of the most famous peacemakers was Mahatma Gandhi who developed his creed of passive resistance against injustice. He often fasted until the violence stopped in his native India during the fighting which led to independence in 1947.

"Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called children of



God" (Mt 5:9). So Jesus taught his disciples and the crowds that gathered near the Sea of Galilee. Later on the road to Emmaus, Jesus said, "Peace be with you" (Lk 24:36). We too are encouraged to keep this peace alive in our hearts, this stillness, being in communion with God, while at the same time sharing this peace with others. Today, during our ceremonies and liturgies, we are encouraged to share a sign of peace or to go in peace. We offer prayers

for all the peacekeepers: in the military and other places of employment, in our organizations and our churches and even in our families. Let us pray for the victims of violence who perceive themselves as powerless to become peacekeepers. Let us pray for every individual who has been empowered and is willing to make the first gesture toward peace and reconciliation.

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## DECEMBER: Violence Against Women

If ever violence against women was at the forefront of global society, it is now. From stoning women to death in some Middle Eastern countries, to ironing girls' breasts to prevent them from developing so they are seen to be less vulnerable to rape and early marriage in some West African countries, violence against women is prevalent.

There is sexual trafficking in young girls and women from mostly Eastern Europe and Asia that has become almost unstoppable while in my part of the world we have

had to witness the aftermath of an all-out slaughter of as many as 49 women abducted from Vancouver's East-end, by one man. These types of violent acts are unimaginable to those of us with sane minds who try to contemplate such evil.

What happened to pig farmer Robert Pickton's mind and others like him who continually abduct and murder young aboriginal women in Northern BC along Highway 16--the *Highway of Tears*? What takes place in the mind and heart of any man that believes he



has the right to destroy women and young girls and yes, young boys as well?

I do know one thing, we all have souls... which brings to mind one of Pickton's victims whose remains have just now been handed over to her family. "We'll have a family ceremony", a sister told the reporter with a minister attending. "My sister always carried her prayer card with her, "the 23rd Psalm" which will be buried with her remains".

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