Overcoming Poverty in Uganda

Women in Uganda confront climate change and poverty with new agricultural and financial skills thanks to a grant from United Methodist Women.

by Paul Jeffrey

In two small villages in Uganda where hunger and disease have torn families apart and ravaged the environment, rural women are making changes with help from their sisters in United Methodist Women.

In Kabulasoke, a women’s group has used funds from United Methodist Women’s A Call to Prayer and Self-Denial offering to buy seeds and agricultural tools, learn better composting techniques and grow new varieties of vegetables that offer better nutrition for their families—all leading to improved status for women who’ve long suffered from abuse and domestic violence.

“Everyone should have enough food to eat, but we never did, and what little money we had was spent on food, leaving nothing for school fees and other needs,” said Grace Buba, a mother of nine children in Kabulasoke. “My children would get sent home from school because I couldn’t pay the fees. But then we learned to grow more and better vegetables; not only do we now have enough to eat, but I can sell my surplus and earn money. Now I can pay the school fees, and people stop me to ask why my children look so healthy.”

Not everything has changed, however. “My husband doesn’t like the vegetables. But he likes that we have more money now,” Ms. Buba said.

Like countless villages across East Africa, Kabulasoke has struggled with relentless environmental deterioration. Poor farmers worked the thin topsoil to death, then were encouraged to pour on expensive chemical fertilizers in an effort to coax more production from the tired soil. Trees have steadily disappeared as machete-wielding women have sought out fuel for their wood-fired kitchen stoves. Regional climate change has brought changing rainfall patterns and drought.

While the Kabulasoke program has wrought change by taking aim at combating food insecurity, another program in Uganda—also funded by the A Call to Prayer and Self-Denial offering—has focused on fighting financial illiteracy.

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Overcoming Poverty in Uganda

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The town of Lukaya sits along a major highway, and for decades truck drivers have spent the night there. When HIV infections began to spread throughout Africa in the 1980s, Lukaya was a focal point of the disease. Poor women drawn to prostitution (and the local men who patronized the highway brothels) carried the virus back to their homes in Lukaya and nearby villages. Soon orphans began to outnumber adults in some areas.

Many of the families in Lukaya are headed by widows. Sylvia Namaganda is one of them. Her husband died three years ago, leaving the 35-year-old woman with three children. When Ms. Namaganda’s sister died, she took in her four children. So today Ms. Namaganda cares for seven children, and her only source of income is what she can grow on a small plot of land. With help from the Good Samaritan Women’s Project, Ms. Namaganda started keeping track of her finances and joined a self-help savings group. She’s doing better, and recently acquired a pig and chickens, which she intends to raise and sell. “It all goes to school fees for the children, and I’m still struggling to pay for them all, but I’m doing better than before,” she said.

The Good Samaritan Women’s Project started a campaign to build financial literacy in Lukaya. With funding from A Call to Prayer and Self-Denial, it hosted workshops, provided mentors and launched a series of programs on a local radio station. The project worked with schoolteachers to educate young children about financial matters and prodded religious leaders to talk about financial responsibility during their gatherings. Funding from United Methodist Women members bought bicycles for volunteer promoters to move around in neighboring villages. Over 2,000 beneficiaries developed goals, prepared budgets and carried out an accounting system to track their personal finances. Many women involved in the program joined self-help savings groups.

Some of the participants warned that although a woman’s status is improved because she earns money, problems can still arise. “Men are very wise. When you get your money, they find a way to trick you. You can go to the local council to complain, but they won’t do anything. So you give up,” said Jane Nampijja. “It’s terrible that we have to count our money carefully and hide it from the men, but otherwise they’ll spend it on drinking and other women,” said Maria Nannyonjo.

Each week the Lukaya women gather in their support groups, each putting in their weekly savings while sharing news of the community. These are joyful gatherings. “The women share the progress they’ve made, even little steps like being able to buy some soap or sugar for their families because of the money they’ve earned from selling their excess crops,” said Ms. Nakijoba. “They’ve developed a vision of where they want to go, and all the budgeting and financial management skills provide them the little steps that will get them there.”

The Rev. Paul Jeffrey is a United Methodist missionary and senior correspondent for response magazine. He blogs at kairosphotos.com. View a 10-minute video, Empowering the Women in Uganda, at www.youtube.com/UMWomen to meet some of the farmers in this article.
A Call to Prayer Grant Supports Deaconess Home in the Philippines

by Mary Beth Coudal

Thanks to United Methodist Women giving through the 2014 A Call to Prayer offering, the holes in the roof are being repaired at the 50-year-old Decker Home, a refuge for the Philippine deaconesses for decades. The Decker Home was named to honor the Woman’s Foreign Missionary Society missionary, Marguerite Decker, who served as the principal at Harris Bible Training School for young women in the Philippines in the early 1900s.

Nestled among the Quezon City skyscrapers, the Decker Home currently houses many people in need of healing, reconciliation and rest – students from nearby universities; church workers engaged in outreach ministries; women and children who have survived violence; and retired deaconesses. Those who live and work in the home no longer need buckets to catch raindrops during the rainy season; the guests are able to go about the work of healing and supporting the healing of their neighbors in this bustling Philippine neighborhood.

A Call to Prayer and Self-Denial 2016: Empowering Women at Work

by Mary Beth Coudal

The giving to A Call to Prayer and Self-Denial makes a huge difference. In 2014, members raised more than $730,000 for partners to help their buildings and institutions “go green.” In 2015, the giving continues to support “A Gesture of Gratitude,” the pension and health benefits for retired deaconesses and missionaries.

The 2016 theme is “Women at Work: Economic Justice and Empowerment.” One hundred percent of this offering will go to national and international programs to empower women to earn a living. Funded projects may include job readiness, skills training and small-business workshops. The grant may also support campaigns to advocate and educate around economic justice for women at a local, national and global level.

Often the members of United Methodist Women circles plan their program for A Call to Prayer and Self-Denial in February; and women follow the curriculum found in the Program Book. The 2016 Call to Prayer program suggests creating a time and space for hospitality and welcome. The program was written by Darlene DiDomineck, deaconess at the Grace Café at Arch Street United Methodist Church in Philadelphia, who suggests a recipe swap and potluck. “During the meal, invite those seated at tables together to discuss why they chose to share this recipe and why it has been a blessing to them.” She reminds us, “In the early church, sharing meals was central to the formation of Christian community. They were times of prayer, praise and the sharing of the sacred stories on another’s life experiences.”

Share your meal and your abundance through A Call to Prayer and Self-Denial, a special time and way to give to United Methodist Women projects.
United Methodist Women Honor Lila Foree with the Georgia Bates Award

by Marie McCoy

This April, the Highland Park United Methodist Church (HPUMC) United Methodist Women presented the first-ever Georgia Bates Award in honor of a woman who exemplifies a life of service. Georgia Bates, a nurse sponsored by HPUMC for over three decades, was known for providing care to the poor in West Dallas, Texas. Her legacy continues today through programs such as the Visiting Nurse Association and Meals on Wheels.

It is fitting that the first recipient of the award would also be a person known for having a lasting effect on the mission field. Since 1967, Lila Foree has made significant contributions to HPUMC’s global outreach efforts, specifically in Haiti.

“In a church full of servant leaders, we have no finer example than Lila Foree,” says Senior Minister Rev. Paul Rasmussen. “Lila has been at the forefront of our longest-standing global outreach effort — The Haiti Eye Clinic — since its inception.”

Ms. Foree was part of the first team of HPUMC church members to travel to Haiti in October of 1976. The team was tasked with providing medical care to patients in Haiti, a region where proper treatment facilities are often scarce. While her main job was to help keep records and supply lists updated, Ms. Foree was quickly tapped for a more hands-on role.

“I was asked to help the ophthalmologist in the operating room as his circulating nurse,” says Ms. Foree. “I got a quick course, then on-the-job training. It was an amazing and life-changing experience.”

Following the 1976 trip, the focus of mission work in Haiti shifted to eye care. Because there was no eye care available in the surrounding area, thousands of people were needlessly going blind. The Methodist Eye Clinic was officially opened in October 1985. Since then, the clinic has helped bring sight to over 35,000 people.

At each step of the way, Ms. Foree has remained a committed member of the medical mission’s team in Haiti. Decades after that initial visit, she credits the Haitian people for keeping her coming back year after year. “There is nothing more moving than sharing that moment when bandages are removed following cataract surgery and a patient can see again after many years of being blind,” said Ms. Foree, who says many of the patients treated at the eye clinic walk for miles from the surrounding villages, some leading or carrying their blind family members or friends.

The impact of the eye clinic and the medical teams who have served in Haiti has expanded to other parts of the globe. “The eye clinic has become a model for others in Haiti and elsewhere,” says Ms. Foree. “The feeling of using the talents God has blessed us with is a wonderful legacy of any outreach.” It is precisely that rich legacy that led the United Methodist Women panel in Texas to honor Lila Foree as the first recipient of the Georgia Bates Award.

United Methodist Women Board Meets in New York City

by Mary Beth Coudal and Yvette Moore

United Methodist Women directors adopted a 2016 budget, heard financial reports and approved more than $1 million in U.S. and international grants and scholarships during their semiannual board meeting at the Church Center for the United Nations in New York City, Oct. 1.

In a related action prior to the meeting, United Methodist Women’s new regional missionary for Latin America, the Rev. Andrea Reily Rocha Soares of The Methodist Church in Brazil, was commissioned along with seven new General Board of Global Ministries missionaries in a service during that agency’s board meeting, also in New York City, Oct. 1.

United Methodist Women directors approved a $17.77 million 2016 budget for the organization from Mission Giving funds. The budget includes $3.94 million for national and international programs administered by United Methodist Women, $8.5 million for program services administered by United Methodist Women. Programs administered by United Methodist Women include national mission institutions’ insurance, repairs and management; membership and leadership development; mission education; program resources; the Deaconess and Home Missioner Office and other membership services.

In her address to the directors, Harriet Jane Olson, United Methodist Women chief executive officer, called the board’s strategic planning and other work over the past quadrennium examples of “hope in action.”

Board President Yvette Kim Richards also addressed the directors, sharing lessons learned in her quest to visit as many of the 96 United Methodist Women-related national mission institutions as possible while in office.

“Awesome. Loving. Outstanding. Bold. Gracious,” Ms. Richards said, after telling a story of United Methodist Women’s support for a national mission institution’s day care program that had fallen on hard times. “The doors were about to close, but thanks to the dedication of the board and a new director, children are able to play, are able to be safe.

“It’s all about your spirit and compassion that you show as United Methodist Women,” Ms. Richards said.

Read more about the actions at the board meeting at http://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/news/united-methodist-women-board-meets-in-new-york

Mary Beth Coudal is interim managing editor of response, the magazine of United Methodist Women. Yvette Moore is director of communications for United Methodist Women.
Former Prisoner Expresses Gratitude in Sierra Leone

by Hannah Conteh
as told to Joe Edward Pormai

Let me start by appreciating God for directing the Prison Ministry of The United Methodist Church Sierra Leone Annual Conference to my path. I still cannot imagine seeing myself out of prison at this moment. I sometimes ask myself this question, “Is this the end of my fifteen years conviction?” I feel joy flowing like a river in my life. Since the comforter has come, God abides with me while speaking peace to me. Oh! What assurance I have in my soul today.

My imprisonment started because of my business partner and me. We started a business. It soon became hard for me to get sales to meet my part of my commitment, and my partner could not bear with me. She took this issue to the Central Police Station. Despite the effort I made to pay back her money, she used her influence and requested the matter be forwarded to the court, where I was convicted to fifteen years in prison. Indeed, that was not God’s final word.

In prison, life was very horrible. Our freedoms were withheld, the food was not good, and we had no exercise. I became hopeless and I decided to kill myself in prison. I even attempted to drink a bottle of Dettol (antiseptic) to remedy my problem. I can still remember that day when Rev. Daisy Giblosh, a member from The United Methodist Church Prison Ministry, came around to preach to us. Her sermon took us to five different countries. I felt better, and I decided not to give up, because giving up means it is over. These faith-building words brought me closer to The United Methodist Church. And I said to myself, the moment I leave this prison, The United Methodist Church is going to be my family because they visited me when I was in prison, they shared their gifts with me. Their non-discriminatory interaction brought hope and life to me.

Honestly, the prison ministry gave me values and skills. I now have bead-making skills, which will help me manage my life. I want to appreciate God and the Prison Ministry of The United Methodist Church for my freedom. This ministry advocated for my release. In the history of Sierra Leone, amnesty has never been given to ten prisoners at the same time. The United Methodist Church Prison Ministry influenced this in our time. My prayer is for them to continue the advocacy for the others there.

I want to thank God for The United Methodist Church Prison Ministry. Other organizations have visited us, but the Prison Ministry of The United Methodist Church has been unique in their approaches to reach us.

My thanks go to Bishop John K. Yambasu and wife Mrs. Millicent Yambasu, United Methodist Women through Mrs. Elmina Sellu and Mrs. Fenda Quiwa, regional missionaries of United Methodist Women, and volunteers Mrs. Marian Bah, Rev. Mrs. Daisy Giblosh, Ms. Edith Rogers, bro Joe (Pormai) and others. You have been a blessing in my life.

Let me conclude with the lyric of a song that has brought hope and courage to me.

When the storm is over my trouble days are ended, I shall join hands together in praying to my God. Lifting my hands together praising God, Oh praise Jesus I have made it.

This was how Sister Hannah Conteh came to know Christ’s love for her through the relentless effort of the Prison Ministry of The United Methodist Church. She has indeed manifested her appreciation to the church by becoming a member of the King Memorial United Methodist Church and The United Methodist Gospel Band. Her presence in the band has been exceptional and overwhelming.

We thank God.

Joe Edward Pormai is a volunteer with the Prison Ministry, a ministry created by the United Methodist Women regional missionaries Mrs. Elmina Sellu and Mrs. Fenda Quiwa. Ms. Conteh was granted presidential pardon on April 27, 2015, during the country’s Independence Day celebrations.

Fun for All: International Celebration in Murray, Kentucky

by Nancy Doty

On June 3, 2015, Murray First United Methodist Women in Murray, Kentucky, held their annual Women’s Celebration to foster intergenerational fun. The church hall was decorated in a global theme. Each table at the potluck was assigned a tour guide who took us to five different countries.

Our passports were stamped and we learned about women and children at each stop. Stories were read, pictures were colored, musical instruments and games were played, and art projects were made. In Guinea, we got to shake gourds and goat toe rattles, beat drums and play a thumb piano while others played a game in the dirt, which was actually a burlap covering. We tasted cuisine from the Philippines and made a metal art project in Italy. Everyone learned about the India bindi, the dot or jewel worn between the eyebrows. Our tour of Central America showed us the fun of a piñata.

A representative of Trades of Hope educated us about women in poverty who are empowered to create commercial opportunities by selling their fashion accessories and home décor. The world tour brought us together to learn of God’s love in all corners of the globe.

Nancy Doty is the communications coordinator at Murray First United Methodist Women in Murray, Kentucky.
Two Winter Reads

Advent is a wonderful season to reflect deeply on what really matters. Here are two recommendations from the Reading Program. Find more selections, many on sale, from the Reading Program at the Mission Resources Center at www.umwmissionresources.org.

SOCIAL ACTION: Just Mercy
by Bryan Stevenson

This is a powerful, true story about the potential for mercy to redeem us and a call to fix our broken system of justice, from one of the most brilliant and influential lawyers of our time. Bryan Stevenson was a young lawyer when he founded the Equal Justice Initiative, a legal practice dedicated to defending those most desperate and in need: the poor, the wrongly condemned, and women and children trapped in the farthest reaches of our criminal justice system.

SPRITUAL GROWTH: Silence and Other Surprising Invitations of Advent
by Enuma Okoro

Okoro invites us to look at the story of Zechariah and Elizabeth, which is filled with deep sorrow and heartfelt longing. Ms. Okoro’s tough yet tender wisdom acknowledges the wounds we endure and the blessings we receive, the grief we bear and the joys we’re given. Her poetic and poignant daily meditations will echo long after the Christmas season has passed.

Small and Mighty: Feeding the Multitudes in the Ozarks
by Lerene Salisbury

Nestled in the picturesque Ozark Mountains at the confluence of the North Fork and White Rivers in North Central Arkansas is the small town of Norfork. One of the oldest settlements in the state, Norfork is a well-known destination for anglers who not only love the quest for trout, but enjoy the tranquility of the local waters. This is also the setting of Norfork United Methodist Church, whose small congregation has shared God’s love for over a century, often stepping out in faith to make a difference in the community.

In 2003, Norfork United Methodist Women was organized with about a dozen members. The women prepared a weekly bag of food for children in need at the local elementary school, where nearly 85 percent of the students are on the free or reduced-price lunch programs. Thus began the Food for Kids program in 2004. At that time, the food came from the Arkansas Rice Depot and the Food Bank of North Central Arkansas (FBNCA). In 2010, the Norfork United Methodist Women weekend meals and backpack program expanded to include service to students in the upper grades.

Over the years, the service area has continued to grow, now approaching 100 agencies in nine counties, distributing nearly two million pounds of food annually. With this growth, a great need arose, again, for a larger warehouse and distribution facility and, in particular, one that can accommodate larger trucks. Because members of Norfork United Methodist Church have continued to serve on the FBNCA board, on committees, on the Bridge Bash Task Force, as volunteers at the food bank, food pantry and thrift store, and remain focused on being God’s hands in the community, the congregation voted to donate $10,000 to the FBNCA building fund in 2012. This donation honored church member Alice Ayers, who began the food ministry with a soup kitchen in her home after an unprecedented nine tornadoes and flooding hit the region in December 1982. The 2012 donation continued the church’s focus on those who are food insecure. To date, funds are still being elicited to erect the new warehouse building.

In 2013, United Methodist Women relocated the backpack food storage and packing operation to the Norfork High School campus. Student organizations began to help unload, shelve food and fill the backpacks; thus, learning teamwork skills and community service. This reorganization created an increased awareness in both the town and school communities of the need to feed children over the weekend. There has also been an increase in financial support and participation with the Norfork United Methodist Women Backpack Team at Bridge Bash, the annual fundraiser for the FBNCA. The 2014 Norfork UMW Bridge (Continued on Page 7)

Arkansas Rice Depot makes a food delivery to Norfork United Methodist Church.
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Bash Team raised over $8,600, which transferred into food credit at the Food Bank, and provided weekend meal backpacks to 78 students/week for the school year.

In 2015, United Methodist Women further enlarged their mission by adding a summer food program for children, Summer Meals to Go, and a pilot Senior Garden project. A recent church visitor commented that a lot of good things have come out of Norfork United Methodist Church. With an average Sunday service attendance of less than forty, we like to think of ourselves as small, but mighty.

We've always loved the parable of Jesus feeding the multitudes, assuring us that he was the bread of life that came down from heaven. We feel God’s presence as we do God’s work in our community and know He blesses us as we continue our mission to help those who are food insecure.

We continue to pray for guidance that we might go where He would have us go and do what He would have us do, always embracing John Wesley’s admonition to do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the places you can, at all times you can.

Lerene Salisbury is president of Norfork United Methodist Women in Norfork, Arkansas.

Celebrating 150 Years of Mission!

United Methodist Women is celebrating 150 years of love through the Legacy Fund. You are invited to join the party that continues to 2019.

We are ensuring our beloved United Methodist Women stays vibrant for another 150 years.

Send a check to:
United Methodist Women
475 Riverside Drive
15th Floor-Finance
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Make your check payable to United Methodist Women and note project #3001147 the Legacy Fund on the memo line. Or visit www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/legacyfund to give online.


O most amazing Creator,
You created a world in which a star burns so much of its self, that there is life on Earth, millions of miles away.
You created a world in which tiny, complex creatures thrive in a frond of seaweed in the vast ocean.
You created a world that constantly honors and promotes life.

O most gracious Creator,
We thank you for life on Earth with you, with all your creation, with each other.
We celebrate the amazing uniqueness and differences of all beings that live together on this wondrous planet.
O God, it is because you gave us hearts for honoring life that we pause at this time of challenge and promise before and during the days of General Conference in Portland, Oregon, to be still and listen:
to each others’ stories of fear, hurt and hope;
to your call to justice and love;
to your Spirit of Compassion within.

(Period of silence.)

May we learn to love and not to judge all others in the human family, regardless of any differences that have ever divided us, your people, one from another, in ways that have caused pain at the very least, and worse in the extreme.
May we learn to live and to love every one in the human family, in all our beauty and diversity, in faith that every one is your creation, beloved to you.
May we hold each other in compassion, gentleness and courage as we discern your creative, life-giving ways toward understanding and union, so that all people, all beings can thrive and share in the wonder and beauty of our communal life on this exquisite blue marble of a planet.

In the way of Jesus, we pray, amen.

Pat Hoerth is a deaconess serving at the Turtle Rock Farm, a center for sustainability, spirituality and healing.

Natural beauty found at the retreat center at Turtle Rock Farm near Billings, Oklahoma.
Mission Resources

2016 United Methodist Women Annual Sampler

The 2016 sampler subscription includes:

- 2016 Spiritual Growth Study on The Bible and Human Sexuality, $10.00
- 2016 Issue Study on Climate Justice, $10.00

The Spiritual Growth Study on The Bible and Human Sexuality and the Issue Study on Climate Justice will ship in December 2015.

- 2016-2017 Program Book, $10.00
- 2017 Date Book, $1.50
- 2017 Prayer Calendar, $14.00

The 2016-2017 Program Book and Date Book will ship in July 2016.

Sampler subscription renewal is not automatic. Please renew each year.

Subscribing to the sampler allows you to order five key resources just once a year and receive them as they become available. This money-saving package includes five resources — all yours for $40 (a $5.50 savings), plus free shipping.

$45.50 $40.00

K3183 English

K3186 Spanish (Date Book and Prayer Calendar are in English)

K3187 Korean (Date Book and Prayer Calendar are in English)

Offer ends April 1, 2016!

A Call to Prayer and Self-Denial 2016

Women At Work: Economic Justice and Empowerment

“A Call to Prayer and Self-Denial” materials offer an opportunity for United Methodist Women members and friends to prepare and give to United Methodist Women special missions. The materials can be used to build a program or shared in worship services. Have materials available year-round for those who’d like to support United Methodist Women!

Trilingual packet materials (English/ Korean/ Spanish) include introductory letter, order form, prayer card, poster and offering envelope.

Packet $2.00 (K7035)

Give any time at www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/donate

Individual items can be purchased at www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/store.

The “A Call to Prayer and Self-Denial” program can be found in the United Methodist Women Program Book 2015–2016: [D1] Welcomed by God, Welcoming All. Use the program and the packet to create a welcoming A Call to Prayer and Self-Denial service.

Give any time at www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/donate