



I  
WAS  
HUNGRY  
AND YOU...



THE GIFT MATTERS!!

***A Resource Kit to  
Guide Congregations in  
Planning Christmas Gift Projects.***

A kit initiated by Wascana Presbytery, Division of Mission and supported by the Global Concerns Committee of Saskatchewan Conference.

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## **“The Gift Matters”: Introduction**

Several years ago two people in Saskatchewan Conference with experience in the less developed parts of the world encountered the popular Operation Christmas Child project, which involved filling items in shoe-boxes and sending them to children in need overseas. Susie Ibutu, Economic Justice staff for the National Council of Churches in Kenya, was here as a "Mutuality in Mission" visitor. Jan Van Aertselaer is a United Church minister who served for a time in Kenya. When they saw the shoe boxes and what they contained they immediately raised some question about the appropriateness of the project, from the perspective of their experience in a less developed country. They took their questions to the Conference Global Concerns Committee. The Global Concerns Committee has since led a campaign to raise awareness about some of the issues and concerns around this kind of outreach project.

Wascana Presbytery offers this kit as a source of information for Pastoral Charges as they make decisions about appropriate ways to share their caring for others. It gathers short articles, most of which have appeared elsewhere, about some of the concerns. It also includes some suggestions of alternate projects that might be considered.

We hope that this kit will be used by Outreach Committee and Christian Education Committees as they look for ways for children, youth, and adults to give meaningful expression to their concern for others, while avoiding unforeseen negative effects.

**This project was financially supported by the  
Generosity for Mission Fund  
of the Saskatchewan Conference.**

*December 1, 2002*

## **Best of Intentions**

It's that time of year when we struggle with gifts – who to buy for, what to buy! This could be called the "Season of Best Intentions." Rudy Rauser has something to say about good intentions. Rudy is a United Church member who has visited and worked in Nicaragua. He is concerned about some of the projects of well meaning people with the best of intentions---projects that send gifts to Nicaragua and other places. Often the gifts are too few in number and unsuitable in content. Instead of joy they bring conflict, jealousy, and sorrow.

Rudy says, "in Pearl Lagoon, Nicaragua, we saw happy children at play with crude homemade toys. Judging by the excitement and laughter, they were just as happy as Canadian children. What they lack are adequate health care and schooling. Are those gift projects, assembled with love and the best intentions, a worthwhile means of doing mission work? I think the approach of the United Church is the correct one-- to provide the means for self-help to as many as possible. For us that means through the **Mission and Service Fund**."

It is natural to want to give a gift that we choose and deliver ourselves. When we pool our resources and allow the **Mission and Service Fund** to deliver our gifts, we provide a better chance for hope and happiness for children everywhere. Consider making your gifts to mission through the **M&S Fund**. Sometimes even the best of intentions needs rethinking.

Minutes for Mission 2002

## **Cultural Sensitivity: Issues to Consider when Choosing a project**

If you are not familiar with the cultural traditions of the recipients of the gifts you or your group are giving, here are some things to think about:

- ★ Gift giving is not necessarily a part of the Christmas tradition in many other countries. If the faith tradition of others does not include Christmas do we have a right to impose our tradition on them? Is the tradition of gift giving something we want to export to countries where this is not a tradition?
- ★ This is a Christian holiday. Are we contributing to division within communities where there is more than one faith? Is our intent to evangelize or convert with our gifts? Are we exporting consumerism and materialism along with our gifts?
- ★ Imagine yourself as a child living in a family where all resources go to obtaining food and shelter and suddenly you receive a package with a doll or a toy car. What does it feel like to receive something from someone who has such excess income that they can buy something that is not needed?
- ★ If something that is purchased takes precedence over something which is homemade, have we usurped the family's ability to give from the heart?
- ★ When we include personal care products such as soap and toothpaste in our gifts, are we sending a message that we feel they are not able to maintain their personal hygiene? Some charity projects encourage sending personal care products. Often the recipients have no knowledge of these products because they use natural methods to maintain their cleanliness and they have no need of these products. They may also not have any access to clean water. Toothpaste may be perceived as candy. Should we be rethinking some of our efforts to help people?

*Written by Jan Van Aertselaer*

## ***Christmas Boxes*** **A Story from Nicaragua by Leslie Harrison**

I arrived in Bluefields, Nicaragua on the morning panga (speed boat) and walked through the town towards the church. I came to Bluefields from Pearl lagoon, where I was serving the Moravian Church as pastor, about three times a month and always stopped in at the church there to say “hello” and collect any mail. This day was different.

As I drew closer, I could see the sidewalk crowded with children of all ages and descriptions. I was confused. The gate was closed, yet the gate to the churchyard was never closed in the daytime. Inside the gate were many more children. These children were different from those outside the gate as they each held a box, a shoe-box wrapped in Christmas paper. I got a church worker to let me in and I stood in the relative chaos: some children laughing, many upset, others beginning to cry, a few fighting over what was in their box, a couple passing small items through the gate to little hands reaching in.

Many of the things in the boxes these children had never seen before, which added to the confusion. There were few adults to guide this experience. Adults, usually mothers are busy finding and preparing food, washing, and minding younger children.

I went inside the church to find the two ministers looking tired and frustrated. The boxes had landed on their doorstep and they were expected to take time and energy from their other tasks to distribute these boxes fairly and justly. Not an easy job! There clearly were not enough boxes—there would never be enough boxes for every child.

The two ministers expressed to me their feelings of being compromised in their positions of ministering with all the people. In the midst of the chaos, they asked me, accusingly, if my country had sent these boxes.

When I left the church, the children from Pearl Lagoon who had come on the boat with me were quick to find me and ask when their boxes were coming to Pearl Lagoon. But there were no boxes coming to Pearl Lagoon. There were not enough boxes. There would never be enough boxes for all the children! Is this what the children of Nicaragua needed for Christmas?

*The Reverend Lesley Harrison, from Saskatchewan is a former global mission personnel from The United Church of Canada who served with the Moravian Church of Nicaragua.*

## **Another view about Shoe-box Projects** **by Jan Van Aertselaer**

Some people have asked if we in Saskatchewan are participating in the project in which shoe-boxes are filled with things to be sent to children overseas at Christmas. The Global Concerns Committee of the United Church's Saskatchewan Conference has asked us to consider some of the negative aspects of this project.

Many cultures do not emphasize giving gifts as a way of celebrating Christmas, as we do. To send "stuff" is to impose our materialistic values on others who do not have the means to support an ongoing tradition of giving gifts. As well, many of the recipients do not celebrate Christmas, as they belong to other faith traditions. In some shoe-box projects, Christian evangelistic materials are given out along with the boxes as a way of proselytizing.

Some of the things we send are inevitably culturally inappropriate, such as sending shampoo or toothpaste to children who do not use such products, "Pokemons" to children who have never heard of them, or battery-operated toys to places where batteries are either not available or not affordable.

It is almost impossible to ensure the gifts are distributed fairly. There are many stories of some children receiving the gifts while others look on longingly, and even some stories of communities fighting over gifts because there weren't enough for everyone.

A lot of money is spent on publicity, as well as the cost of sending boxes and hiring people to distribute them, not to mention the money spent by those who fill the boxes. Such a large amount of money and effort could be better spent on meeting people's basic needs, such as clean drinking water, food, health care and education. The recipients have minimal involvement in deciding whether or not this is the kind of help they want.

It seems that this project is more effective at making us Canadians feel good than it is at meeting the real needs of children in other countries.

One of the reasons this project is so popular is because we want to involve our children in learning about the needs of others and we want to teach them about the importance of generosity. This is important. Here's an idea. If children want to give something to the United Church's Mission and Service Fund, you could take home a copy of Mandate magazine, which has pictures and stories about projects supported by the United Church. These could be cut out, glued on some cardboard and put on your Christmas tree or elsewhere in your home as reminders to pray for the needs of children around the world. (See also the other alternatives suggested on page 25.\*)

There's an old saying: "The gift doesn't matter, it's the thought that counts.." In some cases the gift does matter!

*Janice Van Aertselaer is the minister of Grenfell United Church in Saskatchewan. She served as a volunteer in the economic justice program of the National Council of Churches in Kenya (NCCCK) from 1993-1994.*

\* See May 2001 Mandate Magazine, Special Edition and alternatives in this kit.

## Thoughts on Samaritan's Purse (Operation Christmas Child)

*In reply to a query about the United Church position on Operation Christmas Child and the Samaritan's Purse versus support for the United Church's Mission and Service (M & S) Fund, national United Church staff-person Deborah Marshall offered the following thoughts:*

Of course shoe boxes are attractive to the people who fill them and often to those who receive them.

The plea for increasing support for M & S has to do with channeling our financial resources to the United Church of Canada's global partners - who are trying to make a difference for children in poverty in their own situations and through their own creative programs so that they will not need the short-term charity of others.

One global partner who has commented directly on shoe-boxes is Susie Ibutu, economic justice staff for the National Council of Churches in Kenya. Susie spent some time in Saskatchewan as a Partner in Residence and was more recently a global partner guest at General Council. Her criticism is about reinforcing the old models of charity in a way which can be demeaning for the recipient and with goods which are sometimes culturally inappropriate.

Partners ask for justice, not charity. They urge us to work in solidarity with them for permanent and long-term change, hence the Jubilee push for debt cancellation - another action which has made a difference in the thinking of our own politicians and of leaders worldwide. If countries in the global south did not have to spend money to service their enormous debts, they would have resources to address the educational and health needs of their own children.

In July, after the G-7 Statement on Debt drafted at the Okinawa Summit, Jennifer Henry, spokesperson for the Canadian Ecumenical Jubilee Initiative, offered: "Based on estimates from the United Nations, 13 children die every minute as debt servicing sucks money out of health care and education spending. The debt crisis is a death crisis," she said, "but the G-7 are treating it like a case of the sniffles. "

Some people might say that treating global child poverty with shoe-boxes is like treating dying persons as if they had a case of the sniffles. Nothing really changes for these children. They may receive temporary relief but their condition is not cured. Global partners call on us to work with them for long-term change.

United Church people have been asked for a long time to grapple with these larger issues - and some have-through mission study themes, through the Moderator's Consultation on Faith and the Economy, and soon through the animation process of "To Seek Justice and Resist Evil," the paper and recommendations on the global economy affirmed and recommended for study and action by the recent General Council.

In addition, watch for some concrete, yes, even hands-on ideas, now being developed for the next mission study which will be out in May 2001. \*

*Deborah Marshall, Program Officer, Education and Engagement, The United Church of Canada.*

\*This material is now available in the Mandate Magazine Special Edition - *Children: Is Anybody Listening?*



## Articles on Operation Christmas Child from Diaconal News - Spring 2002

*I received a number of responses to my request for information about peoples' experiences with the Samaritan's Purse Shoebox program. One of the responses was from a lay person who writes from a unique perspective. I have also included a critique written by Eric Tusz-King, for his work in Maritime Conference. Linda Clark (Ed.)*

### **From A Unique Perspective**

"This is in response to your query about the shoe-box program. Having both filled shoe-boxes and worked in their warehouse as a volunteer, I can feel in myself how satisfyingly seductive the program is. It feels very personal--you are choosing things that you think will be attractive or useful to a child of a particular age. The fact that you do not know the child, it's particular... developmental stage, or experience with the items, or even the culture and situation they live in (it's certainly a country/life totally unlike my own), doesn't seem relevant when you are out there choosing the items. But it is totally relevant in terms of how the boxes are received. I have always had questions about the coupling of the boxes with a lecture on a particular brand of Christianity but when I asked, I was told that the lecture was not compulsory. I suppressed my doubts, telling myself I wouldn't have listened. When I first did a shoe-box, I had heard no critiques other than my own qualms about the denominational association. It felt like here was something I could do that might make a positive difference to one child. My mind's eye could see it because I could see this end and extend my vision to the other end. I had no knowledge of the other end of course, and the reported reality of shoe-box distribution has almost entirely undone any possibility of creating any more shoe-box gifts from me. Giving money to M&S has never touched me in such a personal way. I write the cheques but there seems to be such an amorphous connection between that money and any possible result. If it is "feeling good"- the unfortunate charity model that motivated so many of us to participate in the shoe-box program, is there any way to accomplish social change that can tap that same human need to feel good?"

Living a Canadian lifestyle automatically means I consume far too much of the world's resources but like most people here I would rather think that it was possible for the rest of the world to live more like I do (even while knowing that is impossible ecologically) than that I should radically change my life to live more like the majority of human populations. This is a long term source of internal personal conflict for me."

### **A Critique of Operation Christmas Child - Shoe-box Ministry of Samaritan's Purse**

Samaritan's's Purse is quite up front that its Shoe-box ministry is charity focused and makes no attempt to help the donor understand the societal background, nor the recipient address the justice dimensions of the situation. Their general approach is that this response is better than nothing.

There have been several criticisms of this solely charitable response. United Church Overseas Personnel Lesley Harrison, in the Mandate, Special Edition May 2001, says her experience is that this mode of charity is actually harmful. It creates divisions in the community or between communities. It, not so subtly, promotes a life style of consumerism, or having more things will solve your problem, that cannot be sustained and should not be something we promote about our wasteful Northern society. It also

(...see over)

promotes this consumer model in relation to Christmas gift giving to countries where this is not part of their tradition, even amongst Christians in those countries.

Such criticisms are not only from The United Church of Canada and would be shared by most international development organizations (sometimes referred to as Non-Governmental Organizations or NGO's). These opinions are not often publicized, because it is not often helpful in their fund-raising to publicly criticize another organization. The United Church of Canada has participated in this criticism because our overseas partners have told us over the years that these forms of Northern charitable programs are not helpful and are contrary to the way they wished the North would help.

Another reason Samaritan's Purse is criticized by mainline churches is that they mix its emergency response to a crisis, with evangelism of the people affected. Several years ago the World Council of Churches held meetings with several international development organizations, one of which was World Vision, I believe. One of results of the meeting was a list of activities all groups affirmed that are inappropriate at the time of emergency relief. Two points I remember from that list are: firstly, that aircraft and other vehicles should not be taken out of commission, from transporting supplies, to accommodate television crews and other promotional media; and secondly, public and private witnessing of the donor agency's faith at the time of crisis is proselytizing and is rejected because it can be manipulative and preys on the vulnerability of those affected.

A more specific and recent criticism of Samaritan's Purse is of its international president, Franklin Graham, and his disrespect of Islamic religion. In a NBC Nightly News, aired Friday, November 16, 2001, it reported, "Graham stood by remarks he made about Islam last month at the dedication of a chapel in North Carolina. At that event, Graham said: "We're not attacking Islam but Islam has attacked us. The God of Islam is not the same God. He's not the son of God of the Christian or Judeo-Christian faith. It's a different God, and I believe it is a very evil and wicked religion." In the NBC report, Graham said, "I don't believe this [Islam] is this wonderful, peaceful religion."

This fostering of misinformation about Islam and promoting inaccurate and hurtful stereotypes of Muslim people is not what I believe our world needs and certainly not what God, as I have come to know God through The United Church of Canada, wants for our being neighbours and respectful of people outside of our understanding of God. I find it ironic that this type of statement comes from the president of an organization that takes its name from Jesus' parable of the Good Samaritan, which was all about being a Neighbours and being surprised by the good Neighbours who is the Samaritan who was excluded by the religious leadership of the time.

I first noted this attitude in the Samaritan's Purse's own November 2001 newsletter, called, "The Call of the Samaritan". Mr. Graham says, "I personally believe this is a strategic moment in history when the people of Afghanistan are open to hearing the truth of God's Word. Communism has failed them, their government has failed them, and even their own religion has failed them" This statement says that he strongly promotes proselytizing and makes no distinction between September 11th terrorists, who held fundamentalist views, and the world-wide Islamic community who rejected this group as being outside the acceptable standards of the Islamic faith. Also in this same newsletter there is another inaccurate, and misleading statement, telling the reader that Samaritan's Purse is the only agency in Afghanistan. This we know is not accurate.

The criticisms made frustrate people's wish to respond compassionately and appropriately to the real needs and brokenness of today's world.

To be honest and to allay any suspicions that the criticisms above are based upon the United Church's jealousy for the dollars raised by Samaritan's Purse, let me say that there are many other international development organizations and churches that respond with programs similar to what I will outline below.\* I do not know the specifics of such groups as well as I know the United Church and as a minister of The United Church of Canada, I am pleased and proud to say that the United Church of Canada provides a better alternative. I also am writing this assuming I am writing to United Church congregations and their members. As members of the United Church, we can feel confident in overseas partnerships and the work being done with them, because they reflect The United Church of Canada's theology, mission and stewardship of resources.

Eric Tusz-King, Program Staff, Maritime Conference.

\*These are outlined on the Saskatchewan Conference Website: [www.sk.united-church.ca](http://www.sk.united-church.ca) from the menu, choose, Global Concerns, then Alternatives to Operation Christmas Child.

From Mandate Magazine, November 2002

<b>Moving from Charity to Justice</b>	
<b>CHARITY</b> supplies Christmas hampers, emergency food services, handouts.	<b>JUSTICE</b> looks at the wages and welfare on which people are supposed to live and asks: "Why are people hungry? Why is unemployment so high? Why is it impossible to live on social assistance?"
<b>CHARITY</b> gives money to calls for overseas relief.	<b>JUSTICE</b> looks at multinational companies and maquiladoras and ask: "Why are people poor? Why do the really rich pay no taxes? How do you redistribute the world's resources?"
<b>CHARITY</b> visits the sick.	<b>JUSTICE</b> looks at the demolition of the health care system and asks: "Why are poor children twice as likely to die before their first birthday than are other children? Why is the best health care system in the world being sabotaged?"
<b>CHARITY</b> binds up the wounds. . .	<b>JUSTICE</b> asks, "Why does it happen? How do we prevent it from happening again?"
<b>CHARITY</b> finds short-term solutions	<b>JUSTICE</b> takes longer, digs for root causes, upsets the apple cart.
<b>CHARITY</b> is socially acceptable . . .	<b>JUSTICE</b> is socially, politically, and economically the bigger risk.

*--developed by Jesuit Brother Jim McSheffrey and adapted by John Asling*

## RESOLUTION RE: “OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD”

Source: Global Concerns Committee  
Financial Implications.- None

- WHEREAS: We believe that God calls us to live in solidarity with sisters and brothers throughout the world;
- AND WHEREAS: The United Church of Canada seeks a relationship of partnership and companionship with church and peoples in the two thirds world;
- AND WHEREAS: Many of our churches and children are under pressure to participate in Operation Christmas Child, which sends shoe boxes of gifts to children in less developed countries;
- AND WHEREAS: Since many cultures do not emphasize gift giving as a way of celebrating Christmas, this becomes a way of imposing our materialistic cultural values on others;
- AND WHEREAS: Many of the gifts sent are unsuitable for the recipients and their cultures (for example: battery run toys; shampoos and toothpaste to cultures that don't use these products);
- AND WHEREAS: We have eyewitness accounts of serious problems with distribution, of children being left out, and of the frustration of local church leaders caught in the dilemma of handing out boxes;
- AND WHEREAS: This type of project is more effective at making donors feel good than at meeting the needs of poor children;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that Saskatchewan Conference of The United Church of Canada encourage its members to look for alternatives to Operation Christmas Child, such as those suggested in the current Mission Study material, and through the support of overseas development through the Mission and Service Fund and the World Development and Relief Fund of the United Church, and other agencies such as UNICEF, Oxfam and Inter-Pares.

*Approved at the Saskatchewan Conference Annual Meeting, 2001*

# A Sample Letter to Local Schools

*Wascana Presbytery has worked to educate local public schools about this issue, given that many of the schools have become involved in Operation Christmas Child. Here is a sample of their most recent letter.*

FIELD(Principal's First Name) FIELD(Principal's Last Name)  
FIELD(School Name)  
FIELD(Address)  
FIELD(City), SK      FIELD(Postal Code)

October 3, 2002

**RE: CHRISTMAS GIFT PROJECTS**

Dear Principal FIELD(Principal's Last Name),

As we enter the fall season already our thoughts turn to Christmas and how we celebrate Christmas in our community. The giving and receiving of presents often become of prime importance. At first glance sending things to third world countries seems like a positive way for Canadian children to share in the giving.

We would suggest that when we choose the things that are sent, then the ability of the receiving country to make people-centred decisions is removed. We ask that you consider evaluating your Christmas gift project with the following criteria.

1. Who decides which children get the gifts and which children don't?
2. Are the gifts culturally appropriate?
3. How are the children involved in the process? Are children asked what they need in order to make a difference in their lives?
4. Does the project address the root causes of the suffering or need?

Experience has shown that when gifts are received in third world countries there can be negative repercussions. Lesley Harrison, a missionary from Nicaragua, tells this story. One day when she reached a church the gate was closed, which was unusual. The children inside were different from the children outside. The children in the yard had shoe-boxes and the children outside didn't. The ones outside were reaching inside for these gifts. The children who received these gifts were confused at what was inside the shoe-boxes, as they had never seen such things before.

Suggestions that meet the criteria of culturally appropriate giving generally include organizations that collect monetary donations. Monetary donations allow third world countries to make people centered decisions that address their needs as they define them. You may consider non-church organizations that are culturally appropriate, such as UNICEF, Oxfam, Interpares. Please don't forget local groups such as Carmichael Outreach, Rainbow Youth Centre, and the Food Bank.

If you have any questions or for more information, please contact Brian Mitchell at the Saskatchewan Conference office of The United Church of Canada, 306-721-3311.

Sincerely,

Paul Dillman  
Chair, Wascana Presbytery

*Please feel free to use and adapt this letter for your context or needs, as appropriate.*

## Can Stuff Save the Children?

As we deal with all this information and concern, one of our reactions is what can we do? What programs are acceptable? This section of the kit will work to addressing these questions. The following letter is from a member of First United Church in Salmon Arm, BC regarding how they addressed the concern.

This letter to the editor was in the April 2002 issue of *The United Church Observer*. Heather McConnell from Salmon Arm, B.C. wrote:

"The "shoe-box" project aims to 'deliver love and hope.' We at First United felt hope could only come from a gift that offered a lasting change in the circumstances of a child's life.

"We learned that 30,000 children die each day from totally preventable causes most directly related to such things as lack of safe water, or food, or basic medicine. We thought of the suggested expenditure of \$25 per box plus \$5 donation and wondered what we could do with that amount that would offer hope. We chose, as a Christmas project, to provide a well for a community, and we chose to work through Canadian Physicians for Aid and Relief, because all the money goes directly to the project, because it receives three-to-one matched funding from CIDA, and because we could choose a specific project, the personal touch that people respond best to.

"We set a goal of \$1,000. We were amazed with a total raised of \$4,602, which, with matched funding becomes \$18,408, a gift of life for more than one community in the Nkhata Bay region of Malawi. We would encourage other congregations to think of ways to give that provide lasting change in the circumstances of people who have so much less than we do."



## Criteria for Choosing a Project

We recognize that it is not possible to identify all possible alternatives, so we also provide some criteria to help you evaluate a project which you may be considering. These criteria are adapted from ones provided in the Mandate Magazine, May 2001. When evaluating a project consider these issues:

1. What is the purpose of the project? Does it invite study to understand the global context in which the children live?
2. Who decides which children get the gifts and which children don't? What criteria are used?
3. Are the gifts culturally appropriate? Do they export our western values or consumerism?
4. Who identifies what the gifts/needs are - the organization, the individual giving, or the people/organization from the recipient community?
5. Is the gift going to individuals or organizations or institutions (e.g. schools, health clinics, etc.) in the community? Organizations and institutions are much better prepared to address core needs and work toward healthy communities with long term benefit.
6. Do the gifts contribute to the health of the child?
7. How are the children involved in the process? Are they more than receivers? Are children asked what they need in order to make a difference in their lives? Are the adults?
8. Are the contents appropriate to our United Church respect for people of other faiths, or do they try and convert them to or promote the Christian faith?
9. Does the project address the root causes of the suffering or need? If it doesn't, then it may bring momentary delight to the recipient but probably won't make a long lasting difference. It won't change the situations that cause suffering.

### **A Good Way to Help: Support the Mission and Service Fund**

The best way to address our global needs and meet the above criteria is to support **The Mission and Service Fund**. Grants from the M&S fund are sent to overseas partners who distribute it according to the needs the partners themselves identify. Many of our partners are involved in community development and social justice work to address the root causes of poverty. Donations can be made generally to the fund or a supragift can be made, designated for the support of educational work of global partners - or to a United Church partner program, for example Los Quinchos School, specifically. Education can be linked with collecting contributions and resources are available in both Special Editions of Mandate: *Children: Is Anybody Listening*; and *Children: Walking Together in Hope*.

The Mission and Service Fund of The United Church of Canada enables us to pool our resources to provide for a wide a varied range of mission and ministry. M & S helps to fund outreach projects and ministries all over Canada, resources for congregations, mission and ministry work with overseas partners, theological education, and education centres such as PCTC.

If you wish your donations to go directly to overseas projects and emergency relief, designate your givings to **The World Development and Relief Fund**, of the Mission & Service Fund.

For Other educational resources and ideas see the Saskatchewan Conference Website:  
<http://www.sk.united-church.ca> under Conference Work - Global Concerns - Alternatives to Operation Christmas Child.

## Project Suggestions

If your congregation is looking for a tangible project which provides an opportunity for your members to buy items to give, the best suggestion is to do this locally. Contact your local organizations in rural or urban communities who work with those in need. This includes:

- Local First Nations communities and reserves;
- Women's shelters;
- Youth agencies;
- Food banks;
- Adopt-a-family programs

These organizations and programs should be able to provide you with a list of their needs.

Our United Church Outreach Ministries that provide direct service would also be able to identify what needs they have. In the Regina area, contact Carmichael Outreach (306-757-2235). In the Saskatoon area contact Saskatoon Inner City Ministry (306-653-2662).

Making contact with agencies or organizations will be a meaningful educational process and will ensure that gifts given will be welcomed by those in need. **The Gift Does Matter**



## **Other Alternatives for Financial Donations**

### **Beads of Hope Campaign (United Church AIDS Awareness and Advocacy - M&S)**

*The United Church of Canada has launched a one-million dollar fundraising campaign to help address the growing HIV-AIDS pandemic that is gripping the world. The United Church's global partners are responding to this humanitarian crisis by identifying the needs within their own communities. To do this work, they need additional financial support to supplement the money they already receive from the United Church's Mission and Service Fund. ([www.united-church.ca/beads/home.shtm](http://www.united-church.ca/beads/home.shtm))*

### **Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry**

The Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry (RAPM) is a United Church outreach ministry committed to being helpers and advocates, for and with the poor and the oppressed as they encounter and engage the existing system. They work in both individual advocacy and systemic advocacy working towards the eradication of poverty. RAPM works to participate in the disclosure of the injustice of the existing system and works with others to redeem the system so that justice will prevail through a redeemed system, thus eventually eliminating the need for the ministry's existence. ( <http://reginaantipoverty.cjb.net/> )

### **Sleeping Children Around the World**

*SCAW raises funds to provide bedkits to the neediest of children in underdeveloped and developing countries. The content of each bedkit varies from country to country depending upon local needs, but usually consists of a groundsheet, mattress, sheets, blanket or mosquito netting, pajamas, sweater or other clothing, and personal care items. ([www.scaw.org](http://www.scaw.org)).*

### **Canadian Physicians for Aid & Relief**

*CPAR is a non-profit, non-sectarian organization that is inspired by the vision of a healthy planet, where health is broadly defined to include human well-being, environmental integrity, and social justice. We are dedicated to supporting vulnerable, low-income people in the developing world in their efforts to achieve good health. CPAR works toward this end by helping individuals, communities and grassroots organizations become increasingly self-reliant. We are also committed to informing Canadians about, and engaging them in, the global effort for health and development. ([www.cpar.ca](http://www.cpar.ca))*

### **Doctors without Borders (Médecins Sans Frontières)**

*Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) was established in 1971 by a small group of French doctors determined to find a way to respond rapidly and effectively to public health emergencies, with complete independence from political, economic and religious influences. Their mandate concerns emergency relief. Operations are launched in areas where there is no medical infrastructure or where the existing one cannot withstand the pressure to which it is subjected. In most cases, relief programmes change to rehabilitation projects that may run for several years after the most urgent needs have been met. ([www.msf.ca](http://www.msf.ca))*