

PARTNERS

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Living God's call to do justice

By Karen Bokma

"What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?" Micah 6:8.

Yesterday 24,000 people died because of poverty-related causes. Tomorrow another 24,000 will die. This will continue each day until we live God's call to do justice for the poorest and most vulnerable in our world. Poverty and injustice seem overwhelming—people are hungry, millions of children are orphaned by HIV/AIDS and debt is crippling many developing nations.

Imagine a world where those who are hungry know there will be food to eat when they wake up in the morning. Or a world where the amount of people living with HIV/AIDS is shrinking and where medicine is available to all who need it, regardless of economic level. Imagine a world where all children are able to complete primary education. This world is a possibility.

The Micah Challenge is a global, Christian campaign raising a prophetic and powerful voice for and with the poor. It looks both inwards, to deepening Christian commitment to work for and with eco-

nomically poor communities, and outwards, urging leaders of rich and poor countries to fulfil their public promise to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and so cut global poverty in half by 2015.

The MDGs are the broadest and most ambitious commitment made to fighting poverty the world has made. The first goal is to reduce absolute poverty and hunger by half. The next six goals deal with the consequences of poverty, for example, reducing child mortality, combating HIV/AIDS and bringing sustainable access to clean drinking water. The final goal deals with creating a global partnership for development; working together is the only way we can begin to achieve these goals.

Sign the Micah Call!

The Micah Challenge will bring together millions of Christians from around the world to fight injustice and poverty. Involvement of church members is critical to success. We must draw together, as agents of hope, to tackle the challenge of securing a more just world.

This is a moment of unique potential,

when the stated intentions of world leaders echo something of the mind of the biblical prophets and the teachings of Jesus concerning the poor, and when we have the means to dramatically reduce poverty.

We commit ourselves, as followers of Jesus, to work together for the holistic transformation of our communities, to pursue justice, to be passionate about mercy and to walk humbly with God.

To read more and to sign on, visit: www.micahchallenge.org.

Become involved in the Micah Challenge!

Here's how:

- **Educate yourself and your church.** The Micah Challenge is developing educational resources for all age groups—children, youth and adults. Consider incorporating these materials into your study times.
- **Worship.** The Micah Season of Prayer is from September 11 - October 16. Be on the lookout for worship resources to use during this time.
- **Advocate.** Hold our government accountable in securing a more just and merciful world.
- **Sign the Micah Call.** Make a commitment to the Micah Challenge by signing the Call.
- **Wear a white armband.** Show your support for ending poverty by putting on a white armband. Find out more at www.makepovertyhistory.ca.

Karen Bokma is the Social Justice Coordinator in Canada.



Refugees

Through no choice of their own, refugees have been forced to leave their homes due to fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion. A refugee is one who is unable or afraid to return to his or her own country of nationality.

Who can sponsor a refugee?

Christian Reformed congregations may sponsor refugees with the help of the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee.

Is refugee sponsorship for our church?

To help you discover if refugee sponsorship is for you, ask yourself these questions: Do you seek to give of yourself and perhaps in return receive the blessings of God? Do you seek to share compassion? Do you seek justice? Do you seek to be a witness? If the answer is yes, refugee sponsorship may be for you.

Assess your congregation's resources (financial and human), interests and commitment. You may also wish to speak with another local church with sponsorship experience.

How do we begin?

Call Rose Dekker or Theresa de Roos of CRWRC in the Burlington, Ont. office at 1-800-730-3490.

Entertaining angels

By Rose Dekker

"Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it," Hebrews 13:2.

What do you do when you don't know where your church is going? Where do you find messages from God? Maybe you should wait for angels.

A group of Christian Reformed churches in the Chatham, Ont. area (Blenheim, Chatham-Calvary, Chatham-Grace, and Dresden) did just that. A little over a year ago, they received word that a family of three was arriving from Cairo, Egypt. Just like Jesus and his parents, centuries ago, a refugee family was coming out of Egypt.



Samson, Zewdnesh and Yoseph

After years of suffering violence, poverty, hunger and humiliation, Samson, Zewdnesh and young Yoseph arrived to the warm hospitality of people with generous hearts, ready to offer a cup of cold water in the name of Jesus. With only three days knowledge of the arrival, the group pulled together quickly and found volunteers to pick them up at the airport, a temporary place to live, and several people willing to walk through the early days with the newcomers, helping them get their health and residency documents, taking them shopping, finding an apartment.

A year has passed. Samson and Zewdnesh have become self-supporting, living in their own apartment, depending less and less on the churches that sponsored them. Just a month ago another young couple, friends of Samson and Zewdnesh, arrived from Egypt, sponsored by the same churches. This couple had to leave a child behind with a grandmother in their native Ethiopia.

The same committee, with the help of



Samson and Zewdnesh, who are now adjusted to life in Canada, are helping the newcomers settle into their apartment. That will make settling in just a little easier for them, but they have the added anxiety about bringing their daughter to Canada under the "One Year Window of Opportunity" that Canada allows for dependent family members. Additionally, Samson would like to sponsor his sister to come to Canada. He will commit to take complete responsibility for her while the committee helps with the government application.

One small community of churches, each contributing money and committee members, has been able to help two families in the past year. They continue to submit applications for refugees to come to Canada.

They have found out where their churches are going. They have received angels unawares, messengers from God who have received their hospitality. They have learned what it means to welcome strangers in the name of Jesus, strangers who have become friends.



Rose Dekker is the Refugee Sponsorship Coordinator for the Christian Reformed World Relief Committee.

✳ A MINI-WORKSHOP accompanies this issue of *Partners*. The workshop provides probing questions to explore this topic and apply its theme in on-going ministry. This workshop—and other ones related to themes from previous issues of *Partners*—is available from your Secretary of Deacons or online.



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