



Winter 2012

...a newsletter
of the
Women's
Missionary
Society

WMSMatters!

"A Moment of Truth" Middle East Study Tour

OCT. 22- NOV. 1

The KAIROS Palestine document "A Moment of Truth: A word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering," was commended to Canadian Presbyterian congregations for study and discussion. This tour will help you learn about issues in Israel and Palestine.

You will:

- Meet and worship with local Palestinian Christians
- Travel to Hebron, Bethlehem, Nazareth, Haifa, Jerusalem and other historic cities
- Visit Biblical sites
- Meet with leaders from different faith communities
- Learn about peace building initiatives

For more information, contact:

Matt Foxall, Youth in Mission Coordinator
1-800-619-7301 X259
yim@presbyterian.ca
Deadline: June 1, 2012
Cost: \$3400
Download an application from presbyterian.ca/experiencemission.



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Words from the President

A most successful National Presbyterian Women's Gathering was held on the holiday weekend in May 2011. I am pleased to announce that there will be another Gathering in 2014 and a planning committee has been formed. Also, there will be a special time set aside at the Gathering for the WMS to celebrate its 100th Anniversary, arranged by a separate committee.

Over five years ago we began a visioning process as the future of the WMS was a cause of concern. At that time, we were asked where would the WMS be in ten years—many feeling that it would not exist. The WMS has a great past to celebrate, but now is the time to move forward. With this in mind, the Council Executive has formed a Task Force (more information on pg. in Council Executive report). Difficult decisions have to be made with careful thought and discussion, and they need to be made within the next two or three years in light of our financial reality. We can not leave things the way they are.

The world today is a very different world than when WMS began and the

world that many of us knew growing up. Do we need to change our vision to face the reality of the changing lives of women today? How do we transform ourselves if that is what we need to do? Are we willing to take the next step?

We need to build on the momentum of the 2011 Women's Gathering. The WMS has always been the voice of women who are concerned about the mission of the church. Are we ready to be a newly-formed women's group that continues to support mission and education, but also combat social injustices nationally and internationally and/or meet the needs of Presbyterian women? Whatever comes, we will continue to encourage our existing, faithful WMS groups to carry on with their ministry.

As I write this, it is the beginning of the Advent Season. When you read this, it will be a new year. May the Gift of Christmas bless you with hope, peace, joy, and love.

Joan Smith

Photo: Some WMS representatives and Action Réfugiés Montréal (ARM) staff, during a visit to the ARM office in the fall of 2011. ARM is one of the current Together We Can! projects.

Council Executive Report by Colleen Wood

The WMS Council Executive had a full agenda when it met in Toronto from November 3–5. Prior to the meeting's official start at 5 p.m., many of the committees had already met and had done some great work.

The formal meetings began with Council President, Joan Smith. She reported briefly on the past few months, but quickly changed her focus to the meetings at hand. She reminded us that in addition to our regular business, we would spend some time brainstorming on the future of the WMS. Joan challenged us to step things up and make definite decisions before it is too late. She also encouraged us that any new direction should honour and encourage the faithful WMS groups to continue as long as they wish. She left us with a reminder that we have a great past to celebrate, that good things continue to happen, but that the time to move forward is now.

After further committee meetings on Friday morning, the afternoon saw much of the routine business accomplished. Some exciting new initiatives were confirmed. First, the WMS, will work with the Women in Ministry Committee (and also invite the Atlantic Missionary Society to become involved) to

create and grant a Presbyterian Woman of Distinction Award. The decision from Council Executive to plan another Women's Gathering for 2014, provided a great opportunity to present the award.

The year 2014, will also see the 100th Anniversary Celebration of the WMS. Although the celebration will likely occur at the Women's Gathering, a separate committee, including all the Synodical presidents, has been set up to plan this event.

In other committee news, we were treated to a demonstration of the new Book Room web site. Also, as part of the committee news, *Glad Tidings* will begin to include a 4-session mission study, beginning with their July/August 2012 edition.

During our meetings, we also enjoyed four guest speakers. Stephen Allen, Executive Secretary for Justice Ministries; Rick Fee, General Secretary of the Life and Mission Agency; and David and Anna Pándy-Szekeres, PCC missionaries in Eastern Europe.

Much of the rest of our time was spent considering the future of the WMS. We considered the focus of the WMS today (survival, fellowship, raising funds for mission, study, prayer, business, promotion of the WMS). We looked at the ways that the WMS

New Justice Committee by Dineke Kraay

The newly formed Justice Committee of the WMS met on November 3rd, 2011. Its mandate reads:

To raise awareness and do advocacy of social justice issues, promoting human dignity for all people with a special emphasis on women and children.

We plan to work with our ecumenical sister organizations, such Women's Inter-church Council of Canada (WICC), other denominational women's organizations and the National Council of Women of Canada (NCW).

The committee will begin its task by addressing the following social justice issues.

- A petition on Human Trafficking to be distributed through Synodical presidents.
- The plight of the Roma people (particularly in Canada)
- Refugee situation in Canada.

We realize that poverty is related to these issues. Therefore, the underlying focus of our work will be poverty.

We will also raise awareness of justice issues by paying attention to special dates, such as, Black History month in February; Earth Day on April 22; and World Food Day on October 16.

It is hoped that this new committee will be instrumental in leading the WMS in the area of active advocacy.

is 'doing' mission today (prayer, study, service educating churches, advocacy, encouraging mission staff, local mission, funder). We reflected on the ways we are no longer doing mission. In 1972, the church took over much of the WMS mission work, including staffing. We lost much of our power as decision makers.

We had discussion regarding the Women's Gathering. Many loved the energy and feeling of family at the event. Many left feeling hopeful, challenged, inspired, educated, overwhelmed, and spiritually reborn. One even stated they were, "high as a kite!" Many felt it was fabulous to gather with that many women, and that it would not have been as good if it were a mixed event. This led us to wonder if the WMS is about mission, women, or both. Most felt both.

We also considered if our structure is too formal. Most areas are having difficulties filling all the executive positions in both Presbyterials and Synodicals, but one difficulty is that in some areas, the Presbyterials are stronger, and in other areas it is Synodicals. Because of this, Synodicals are encouraged to set aside time at their next meeting to discuss the structure of the WMS in relation to their area.

Finance Decisions from Council Executive

The Council Executive met November 2012 and approved the following financial decisions:

- \$2,100—Mission trip for Presbytery of London's youth-in-mission program to Manitoba
- \$3,000 (final payment)—Students in Kandamal, India
- \$2,000— Extended mission trips to Kenya and Australia for two young people
- \$5,000—PWS&D for East Africa Relief
- \$9,950 (US)—Tumekutana for their 2011 African Women's Conference in Kigali, Rwanda
- \$5,000—Ibi Chuan to continue his DMin studies at Carey Theological College, VST
- \$500—The Word Guild in support of a Christian writer

Funds were also made available for members of Council Executive to participate in the trip to Northern Ontario for the transfer of the Camp Prescawa site to First Nations Bands in the area.

Seed money for a 2014 Women's Gathering was approved. Of this amount, \$5,000 will be set aside to support a women's award and \$5,000 will be for the WMS's 100th anniversary.

SAVE THE DATE!

Another Women's Gathering is being planned for 2014.

Date: May 16–19, 2014

Place: Sheraton Parkway Hotel, Richmond Hill, Ontario

Finally, we discussed the difference between transformation and resurrection. We find we often get bogged down with our name, the Women's Missionary Society, when what we need to focus on is our vision. We also understand that the image of the WMS is a problem. After much discussion, a motion passed that will see a task force formed. They will look at the following questions:

- Why did so many women attend the Women's Gathering?
- Why did non-WMS members attend the Women's Gathering?
- Could the WMS change to involve these women?
- What does the WMS do differently from Presbyterian Sharing and PWS&D?

After answering these questions, the task force will make recommendations on the future of the WMS.



TUMEKUTANA, AFRICAN WOMEN'S CONFERENCE
Malawi, Ethiopia, and Kenya represented.



New Resource for Glad Tidings

Glad Tidings will launch a new WMS study in its July/August 2012 issue. The study will continue for the program year (Fall–Spring) with three more sessions in future editions of *Glad Tidings*.

The topic is Children and Poverty in Canada. It will look at areas such as food, shelter, and education. The writer, the Rev. Helen Smith, will bring a wealth of knowledge to this study. She served for nine years at Evangel Hall, an inner city mission in downtown Toronto, as Program Director and for two years as the Director of Camp Kannawin in Alberta. Most recently she was the minister on staff at a downtown agency for the homeless in Calgary. She currently serves as minister at Centennial Presbyterian Church in Calgary.

The short studies will have resources for both group study and personal meditation.

Pneumonia Prevention Vests

The knitting of Pneumonia Prevention vests has been a national labour of love for the WMS. Over the years many have contributed their time, talent, and prayers giving preemie babies overseas a great warm start. These vests were intended for babies born at or admitted to hospitals and churches in Malawi and North India.

The WMS became concerned when it learned that work had been taken away from Malawian women because Canada was sending knitted vests. Prior to our involvement, the local women knitted and provided the vests for the hospitals. In India, we also found that many of the vests were too large for preemies and were being used by older children and some adults. The mailing costs for this ministry is extremely high so we also considered proper stewardship of WMS funds.

After some thoughtful consideration, the Council Executive has decided that 2012 will be the last year for groups to receive funds for mailing pneumonia vests to India. If groups decide to continue sending items to Malawi, it will be at their own cost. We

do acknowledge that many have been helped because WMS members and other individuals embraced this ministry.

For those groups who want to continue knitting, there are many other projects closer to home. To eliminate any extra cost surrounding any knitting project, we suggest you look at your own community to see where your group can help. The following are some suggestions from other WMS groups:

- prayer shawls for your congregation, nursing homes, hospitals and care workers;
- hats, mittens, scarves, and socks for food banks, schools, and homeless shelters in adult, children, and baby sizes;
- washcloths for camps, shelters, and your church;
- lap blankets for hospitals and nursing homes;
- knitted dolls for women's shelters or children's hospitals;
- blankets for animal shelters, women's shelters, and homeless shelters; and/or
- anything your local hospital may need like Chemo caps, blankets, and hats for preemies.



The Book Room Web site

We're in the big leagues! The Book Room's new web site has all the books we carry, plus many more titles that can be ordered for you. If you have a question about what book to buy or need help setting up an account, we have cheerful, informed staff to assist. Call us on the toll free line for help.

The site offers easy browsing and staff recommended titles on many subject. If you are looking for a specific book, just search using title, author, or subject. If you click on the book's picture more information will appear. It will even show whether or not the item is in stock.

You do not have to leave your credit card information online. You will be contacted for your payment method. Plus, once you set up an account, you will get an automatic email confirmation.

Each week we have been getting more and more sales from the site. It seems word is getting around and people appreciate the convenience and security. Try it ... tell us what you think.