

Mission Moment

Rejoice in God's Vision

Is the realm of God a place? Or is it a vision?

A holy place can easily become a fortress, from which many are forcibly excluded. But a holy vision is large enough to include all who would embrace it.

Our mission in the United Church of Christ is to lift high a holy vision, so that everyone can see it—and, seeing it, rejoice in their hearts.

That is the purpose and the meaning United Church of Christ Statement of Mission:

Empowered by the Holy Spirit, we are called and commit ourselves...

To praise God, confess our sin, and joyfully accept God's forgiveness;

To proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ in our suffering world;

To embody God's love for all people;

To hear and give voice to Creation's cry for justice and peace;

To name and confront the powers of evil within and among us;

To repent our silence and complicity with the forces of chaos and death;

To preach and teach with the power of the Living Word;

To join oppressed and troubled people in the struggle for liberation;

To work for justice, healing, and wholeness of life;

To embrace the unity of Christ's church;

To discern and celebrate the present and coming reign of God.

March 2010

God is still speaking,

**UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST**



Mission Moment

One Great Hour of Sharing Brings Hope

Si Qing spends most of his days herding his goats and sheep. Like many other shepherds of Inner Mongolia, he is still recovering from the devastating snowstorms of two years ago that killed many animals and laid waste to vast tracts of grazing land. The sheep and goats are traded for food and clothing or sold to pay school and medical costs. The animals' dung provides fuel for cooking and heating during the bitter winters, when temperatures can plummet to -50C.

To counter the loss of these valuable animals, the Amity Foundation, a mission partner supported by One Great Hour of Sharing, launched a project to help 41 families who had suffered the greatest losses. Each family received 25 sheep and signed a 3-year contract to return 15% of newborn lambs to help support other families.

"All 1,025 sheep donated survived the cold winters, yielding a total of 22 lambs per family—well above the average," says Thor-Arne Prois, director of ACT International. He adds, however, that a history of excessive cultivation as well as damage from the blizzards has turned much of the once generous grasslands into a vast desert. The government has fenced large portions of the remaining grazing areas, hoping that the grass will recover. Shepherds like Si Qing must move from one piece of land to another, searching always for greener pastures.

Others, like Siqibili and her husband Wuni Batuo, are no longer nomads, thanks to an Amity project known as "Covered Pen," which provided 80 families with land, building materials, water, and electricity. Their animals are housed in small sheds. Siqibili says she feels safe and at home within their small community, where the brick houses shield them from the cold and neighbors are there to support each other.

Your gifts to the One Great Hour of Sharing offering bring new hope for a better life to countless people around the world. Please give generously.

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But is it True?

Saint Patrick was captured from his home in Britain as a teenager, and taken to Ireland where he worked the fields in slavery for six long years. During his captivity, he grew close to God and heard a mysterious voice telling him that a ship had come to take him home. He escaped to a port 200 miles away, where a ship did indeed return him to his family.

Back at home, in a vision, he heard another voice call him, “We appeal to you, holy servant boy, to come and walk among us.” After that he returned to Ireland, the place of his captivity, as a Christian missionary. He built the church in that beautiful land and the rest is history. It’s an amazing story, but is it true?

In today’s reading, five thousand people wanted to eat, but they only had a few loaves and fishes among them. By the time Jesus had them share, every body ate their fill. It’s an amazing story, but is it true?

One theory about St. Patrick claims that the lives of two men were melded to form the legend of the one. One theory explains that the miracle of the loaves and the fishes is a result of the unexpected generosity of a crowd of people who had extra food in their pockets.

In a culture that tediously hunts for proof, I seek for mystery and beauty, where a chunk of land in the sea can become instead an emerald isle.

--by Lillian Daniel, from the UCC’s online Daily Devotional. Subscribe at www.ucc.org.

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One Great Hour of Sharing Brings Emergency Help

Responding to a severe ice storm that blanketed sections of the Midwest in late January, the UCC's Dakota Association of the South Dakota Conference and One Great Hour of Sharing special Emergency USA fund provided \$8,000 in direct aid to the remote Native American communities of the Cheyenne River Lakota Reservation in South Dakota.

It is estimated that the January 22 storm left 12,000 people without electricity. The Reservation's water treatment facilities were damaged when, due to the loss of power, water removal pumps failed. Though now operational, this malfunction necessitated a 10-day waiting period on the use of potable water supplies and the need for fresh water distribution.

With a reservation that consists of around 2 million acres, there were many families who did not want to leave their rural homes to come to the shelters that have been provided. There are some families who may not have transportation to the shelters. The Dakota Association concentrated its relief efforts on the Cheyenne River to those families not in the shelters in need of food and water.

Pastor Louis Blue Coat, who was closely involved in providing assistance, says, "We are most appreciative and humble-hearted at the outpouring of financial assistance that has come, not just to the Dakota Association, but also to the Cheyenne River Lakota Tribe. We, as an association of churches, recognize that Christ is at work among us, even during our trials and tribulations. It is friends such as you that put Christ into action and enable us to take that message out to those who are suffering, feeling hopeless, needing help and finding that help through our ministry. In our Lakota language, *Lila Wopila* (many thanks)!"

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