

WOMEN OF GRACE WIDOWS' FUND



A Joint Mission Project of Watertown and Canton First Presbyterian Churches

Winter 2014/Spring 2015

Mission of The Women Of Grace Widows' Fund

The mission of the Women Of Grace Widows' Fund is to enact and make real an ongoing structure to alleviate the extreme poverty faced by widows in Malawi by providing funding to meet basic food, shelter, and safety needs, while creating opportunities and resources that enable and empower widows to establish their own self-sufficiency and independence, regardless of religious affiliation.

Keys To Education - Legacy of Friendship & Literacy

In July 2014, the Keys To Education team took their final trip to Malawi under the current grant. Keys To Education is an initiative to increase English literacy in Malawian schools through teacher workshops and curriculum materials. The program has been funded by a **\$34,000 three-year grant** awarded to the Women Of Grace Widows' Fund by **Presbyterian Women** (an independent organization within the PCUSA) which funds this grant through its **"Thank Offering."**

Women of Grace Board Member and Keys to Education founder **Heather White** was joined by fellow teacher **Carol Stevens**. Together with **Sam Chirwa** and **Grace Chiumia**, they traveled to villages to meet with teachers and students, hand out materials, including a new ABC book and teacher kits, and conduct a workshop. **"The ABCs Of Malawi"** book was developed by Heather after her 2012 trip. While distributing ABC cards and charts during that initial trip, she realized that there was some confusion among the Malawians who did not recognize or use the American symbols in the pictures. With her cellphone, Heather took picture of things A to Z in Malawi and used those familiar images to produce this book as well as a teacher's edition with lessons. Over **1,500 copies** of the new ABC book were handed out to children and teachers during the 2014 trip.

Heather and Carol led an intensive three-day workshop for 30 teachers who trained, observed, and practiced lessons based on the ABC book and teacher kit. One teacher in attendance, **Freedom Chawinga**, gave the following speech to express his gratitude for the training and materials provided by Keys To Education:

On behalf of my fellow teachers, I bring you special greeting from Mbowe, the village where hospitality is our second nature and where the warmth of the sun is like smiles on every face. I stand here tall to let you know that since 2012 this partnership between teachers from Malawi and teachers from the United States has accomplished many notable things including the following:

- *Sharpening the minds of all teachers and their future.*
- *Giving us confidence in ourselves.*
- *Providing us with teaching materials like books, markers, word cards, pocket charts and wall charts, just to name a few.*

You also act as a compass that activates the magnets of curiosity, knowledge and wisdom in all teachers. We hope we will be able to spread the essence of your efforts to our various schools.

Last, but not least, it is true that what we have done for ourselves alone dies with us, but what we have done for others remains and is immortal. May the good Lord bless you all. (See a photo of Freedom & other teachers on pg. 4).

Thank You (Zikomo!) To Our 2014 Donors!

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**Thanks to the supporters of
the Canton & Watertown
Cabin Fever Dessert Nights.**

Every effort has been made to provide an accurate list of donors. Please bring any omissions or errors to our attention.

Where We Have Been & Where We Are Going

The Women Of Grace Widows' Fund has its roots in **2008** when four women from **Watertown** and four women from **Canton** were invited to travel to Malawi by the **Rev. Fred Garry** of the Watertown First Presbyterian Church. Their task was to **meet with widows** to discern the best way to help them. At that time, **property grabbing** was common in Malawi. Many women, upon becoming widowed, saw their belongings, and sometimes their homes, taken forcibly from them by greedy relatives. (Though this practice is now illegal, effort still needs to be made to strengthen enforcement.)

After nearly three weeks in Malawi meeting and talking to widows and months of meetings after their return home, the Women Of Grace Widows' Fund was begun with the **goal of raising money and awareness to help these widows**. Acute needs such as **beds, roofs and food** would be provided as well as **micro-loans** to those who wanted to start small businesses with the goal of self-sufficiency.

Four years have now passed since that first fund raising effort and WOG has reached its goal each year. Since 2010, **over \$60,000** has been sent to Malawi to help these women and the children in their care. **Grace Chiumia** as director and **Sam Chirwa** as field manager are instrumental as field managers in Malawi as they travel to villages, meet with the women and administer the program.

Currently, WOG is actively serving **45 widows** from **three villages** in the northern part of Malawi. In two of the villages, the women are using a **village bank model** to distribute funds. This is an informal self-help micro-loan system where the local women decide which project to support and then work together for its success. This has resulted in the raising of pigs, a fish farm and the start of sewing projects. In **Mzenga**, the home of the **Clint McCoy Feeding Center**, the women grow food in the garden which is used at the center. They also are starting a project to decorate gently used clothing for resale. For this, they are looking for **donations of embroidery thread, needles and decorative patches**. Donations can be sent **Heather White**, c/o Watertown First Presbyterian Church, 403 Washington St., Watertown NY 13601.

Let's Talk!

The Board Of Directors for the Women Of Grace Widows' Fund is comprised of women who made the trip in 2008 which started this program as well as women who traveled to Malawi in subsequent years to implement Keys to Education and meet with widows to assess our ongoing programs. We are available to come and speak to your group or organization and share Powerpoint presentations about Women Of Grace or Keys to Education. **We'd love to meet you!**

Watertown Area Board Members:

Julia Bonisteel

Barb Eldridge

Rita Gefell

Renee Waterbury

Heather White

heatherwhite4@gmail.com

315-778-9867

Canton Area Board Members:

Ellen Grayson

Katrina Hebb

Vicki McLain

Linda Potter

nautilus@twcny.rr.com

315-386-4364

2014 WOG/Keys To Education Presentations:

Sherman School Multicultural Fair
Ohio School Multicultural Fair
Star Lake Presbytery Meeting
Theresa Presbyterian Church
Minna Common Anthony Fall Festival
Jefferson County AAUW
Elm City United Methodist Church
Wilson Retired Teachers Group
Philanthropic Educational Organization
Sackets Harbor Presbyterian Church
St.Patrick's Altar and Rosary Society
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Saranac Lake First Presbyterian

Learn more about WOG at our website:

www.WomenOfGraceWidowsFund.org

Women Of Grace Widows' Fund 2014 Photos

See more photos and watch videos at our website www.WomenOfGraceWidowsFund.org.



Heather White shares "The ABCs of Malawi" book.

Wonder in a child's eye who just received his first ABC book.



Widows are raising pigs thanks to a village bank model which provides funds.

A teacher takes a turn in presenting a lesson with Heather White.



Freedom Chawinga, second from left (see speech on pg. 1) with other teachers at a Keys To Education workshop.



Widows gather for a meeting in Mbowe.



Heather White and Carol Stevens pose with widows after a meeting.

Keys To Continue

Even though the initial grant has expired, the Keys To Education program **will continue** by providing **support and materials** to the teachers in Malawi who have attended the trainings. If you would like to make a donation to support this **ongoing literacy program**, send your check payable to "First Presbyterian Church" and marked **"WOGWF-EDU"** on the memo line to, First Presbyterian Church, 17 Park St, Canton NY 13617. Thank you!

Catch The Cabin Fever!

Cabin Fever Coffee & Dessert Nights held in 2014 in Canton and Watertown raised over **\$2,600** and featured live music, samplings of sweets and raffles of gifts baskets and desserts. Join us in **2015** on **Saturday, February 28th**, 2 to 4 p.m. in Watertown at the Ives Hill Retirement Community & 7 to 9 p.m. at Canton First Presbyterian Church.

Feeding The Children

The **Clint McCoy Feeding Center** in the remote village of Mzenga serves as a community center where children receive meals and education and villagers come together. Currently, the **Women Of Grace Widows' Fund** supports the costs of **two meals per week** for the children with the widows assisting with the preparation. The cost to feed the **nearly 90 children** who come to this center is **\$125/month** or **\$1,500/year**. If your church or organization would like to make a **designated gift** to be used for the cost of feeding the children at the Clint McCoy Center, please indicate that with your donation made payable to First Presbyterian Church and mail it to First Presbyterian Church, 17 Park Street, Canton NY 13617.

The ABCs of Malawi is available for \$7 each or \$24 for a set of 4. Perfect gift for young ones! Contact heatherwhite4@gmail.com to order.

Gift Giving Made Easy

You can make a **gift in honor or memory of a loved one** to the Women Of Grace Widows' Fund for **any occasion - Christmas, anniversary, birthday, Valentine's Day, Mother's Day or any day** you want to recognize with generosity and sincerity. Complete the information below and send it in with your donation. The Widows' Fund will **notify the individual** that the gift has been given in their name and that it will be used **to assist widows in Malawi with daily needs and improve their futures**.

Enclosed is a donation of \$_____ to The Women Of Grace Widows' Fund which is being made in honor/in memory (please circle) of: _____.

(Amount of donation is not disclosed on the gift card.)

Please send notification to:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

This gift is from: (names to appear on card): _____

Your name(s): _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone Number: _____

Make checks payable to: Canton First Presbyterian Church & note Widows' Fund on the memo line. Please mail to the First Presbyterian Church, 17 Park Street, Canton NY 13617.

Your Support Of Our Continued Efforts Is Greatly Appreciated!

Every year since 2010, when the Women Of Grace Widows' Fund began to raise money to assist the widows in Malawi, **we have met our goal**. This **tremendous act of generosity** is the result of you - **our donors**. Together as **church congregations, community groups, neighbors and friends**, we have become a **strong and steady source of hope and support** for widows in Northern Malawi. **Please consider a gift today** that will support our efforts in 2015 as we work toward our goal of raising **\$15,000** to assist, empower and support widows with funds to meet immediate acute needs and long-term goals of building self-sufficiency through education, training and micro-loans for small businesses.

___ Yes, I want to support The Women Of Grace Widows' Fund with their continued efforts to assist and empower widows in Northern Malawi. Enclosed is my/our donation of \$_____.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Email: _____



Please send future Newsletters (twice a year) via email (in PDF format).

Thank you! Please make your check made payable to:

Canton First Presbyterian Church (On memo line: Women of Grace Widows' Fund)

Mail check and completed form to: First Presbyterian Church, 17 Park Street, Canton NY 13617.



Women Of Grace Widows' Fund
17 Park Street
Canton, NY 13617