

# WOMEN OF GRACE WIDOWS' FUND



A Joint Mission Project of Watertown and Canton First Presbyterian Churches

Winter 2017/Spring 2018

## Mission of The Women Of Grace Widows' Fund (WOGWF)

*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.*

### Sustainable Sewing Project Update

In 2017, two separate teams went to Malawi to continue the Sustainable Sewing Project.

**Lesley Thompson** of the Scotch Presbyterian Church and **Ellen Grayson** of the Canton First Presbyterian Church, both WOGWF board members, traveled to Malawi in June. Prior to their arrival, a new solar panel had been installed in Mbowe which allowed for the use of newly donated electric sewing machines (treadle sewing machines were solely used for training in 2016). Four women who were trained the previous year made a smooth transition to the electric machines by sewing straight lines on paper and then on strips of cloth. Other women were taught how to use scraps of cloth to construct doormats and construct market bags.

The goal of this trip was to sew **placemats** and **napkins** with the aim of selling these to local inns and hotels and bringing other sets back for sale in the U.S. Ellen and Lesley taught the women - **Martha, Evelyn, Gladys** and **Loveness** - how to measure and cut using a template. By the end of this training, the women were producing napkins and placemats with mitered corners.

The second team, **Margot McGorman** and **Karen Ivings**, arrived next to start training with the widows for the **Panti Project**. In Malawi, as in other third world countries, teenage girls can miss up to **20%** of secondary education because they have no

adequate way to manage their menstrual periods.

The aim of the Panti Project is to train the widows to sew **reusable feminine hygiene kits**. Using simple sewing patterns and locally sourced fabric, the widows produce panti purses which contain two panties, six flannel reusable pads, washcloth, bar of soap and small plastic bag to hold soiled items. A girl can carry the purse to school and discreetly manage her period.

Margot and Karen trained **21 women** who worked as a team. Those with sewing skills made panties, purses and pads. Other women prepared the fabric, traced patterns and cut. Every woman contributed to the success and learned how to appraise each item for quality control. By the end of the training, **25 Panti Packs** were distributed to local teenage girls.

The widows receive a stipend for each item produced and share this income among their group. The women are sewing four days a week with Sam Chirwa arriving every two weeks to pick up completed packs for distribution. The widows in Mchenguatuba are sewing the purses, those in Mzenga are making the pads and Mbowe is responsible for the panties. The widows are working together as a team and seeing how their collective efforts are making a difference in their lives and in the ability of local girls to attend school throughout their menstrual cycles.

# Thank You (Zikomo!) To Our 2017 Donors!

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Fever events, Souper Bowl and  
Mother's Day fund raisers and the  
Watertown Christmas Eve offering.

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

# Changu Changu Moto = Safer, Better Cookstoves



Sam Chirwa (right) and Andy Burns (center) of MELT examine bricks made for a Changu Changu Moto cookstove with a representative from Ripple Africa.



The Changu Changu Moto cookstove (below) replaces the three-stone fire (left). The new cookstoves are sustainable, locally produced and fuel-efficient. WOGWF is providing **50** Changu Changu Moto cookstoves for the



women they serve at a total cost of **\$750**. See **page 5** for more information.

## 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. Send in your donation with complete information about where the card announcing your gift should be sent and how you want your name to appear on the card. (The amount of your donation is not disclosed.) The Widows' Fund will **notify the individual** that the gift has been given in his or her name and that it will be used **to assist widows in Malawi with daily needs and improve their futures.**

## Support The Sustainable Sewing Project

The Sustainable Sewing Project will continue in 2018 with further training, marketing of the Panti Packs and beginning the process of sewing school uniforms. You can support this effort with a designated gift for this project. Thank you for your consideration.



**Enclosed is a donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to The Women Of Grace Widows' Fund for the Sustainable Sewing Project:**

Your name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Make checks payable to: Canton First Presbyterian Church & note Sewing Project on the memo line. Please mail to the First Presbyterian Church, Attn: WOGWF, 17 Park Street, Canton NY 13617.**

# Women Of Grace Widows' Fund 2017 Photos

See more photos and watch videos at our website [www.WomenOfGraceWidowsFund.org](http://www.WomenOfGraceWidowsFund.org).

Gladys, Martha, Loveness & Rosemary display the first four panties sewed for the Panti Project.



Karen Ivings taught the women to check the quality of each flannel pad they made.



Lesley Thompson talking with children at McCoy Feeding Center in Mzenga.



Sam Chirwa with the new Land Cruiser made possible by MELT, WOGWF and donors (pg. 5).



Mary, Tolita, and Jesse at the treadle machines. All three are from Mzenga, an hour and a half from Mbowe.

# Welcome To Kathy

Welcome to the newest member of the Women Of Grace Widows' Fund board, **Kathy Curtis** from the **Theresa Presbyterian Church**. Kathy is a retired teacher from the Thousand Islands Central School District where she taught Family & Consumer Science to middle school students for 16 years. She instructed students on how to make wise decisions, manage their resources (such as time and money), choose healthy foods, basic sewing skills, discover effective ways to work with people of differing personalities, and to choose a career path that would bring them fulfillment and purpose. She still loves to teach.

Kathy grew up on a small farm in south-central Illinois. She was a 4-H member for ten years, involved with many different projects including foods, clothing, child care, and beef cattle. Sewing is a particular passion for Kathy as she has designed and fashioned four wedding dresses, altered countless bridesmaid and prom gowns, designed and made several costumes for school musicals, and is currently developing skill at quilting.

Her most rewarding career was stay-at-home-mom while her four children were growing up. Last year she participated in the Jefferson Leadership Institute and currently serves on the board of directors for the Thousand Island Area Habitat for Humanity as the Faith Relations Coordinator. Kathy looks forward to using her leadership, faith and sewing skills as a member of the WOGWF board.



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## Land Cruiser Partnership

The Women of Grace Widows' Fund partnered with the **Malawi Early Literacy Team (MELT)**, an ecumenical mission project of Watertown First Presbyterian Church, to raise the funds for the purchase of a **2017 Land Cruiser**. The Land Cruiser was acquired in July and immediately began traveling the difficult roads and paths through the bush between the villages and schools served by these organizations. The vehicle serves the **45 women of WOGWF** and the **35 teachers from 10 schools** served by MELT. Many thanks to all who contributed to this important campaign. You can learn more about MELT at **malawiearlyliteracy.org**.

# Changu Changu Moto Stoves

The Women of Grace Widows Fund is working to provide each of our women with a **Changu-Changu Moto fuel efficient cookstove** through a partnership with **Ripple Africa**. This stove saves trees because less firewood is used, is safer because it lessens the risks of burns and smoke inhalation, and allows for faster cooking on two burners which retain heat to prolong cooking. Using local materials, each stove takes one hour to build.

To start the process, each woman makes **30 bricks**. Once the bricks are dry, **Sam Chirwa**, the WOGWF field manager, contacts Ripple Africa who send representatives to the community. Using a simple mud mortar mix, the new cookstove is constructed. The mud mortar means that repairs are easily done by the women. Ripple Africa trains each household on the maintenance of the stove and monitors its success. Along with reducing household wood use by **67%** and being part of the solution for Malawi's deforestation, injuries from children falling into fires and women's long skirts catching fire are nearly eliminated. Through Ripple Africa, each cookstove costs **\$15**.

Changu Changu Moto means **Fast, Fast Fire** in Chichewa. To the Women of Grace Widows' Fund and the women receiving these new cookstoves, it means greatly improved lives. Learn more at [rippleafrica.org](http://rippleafrica.org) and see photos on **page 3**.

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## Sam Chirwa

In October 2017, **Sam Chirwa** visited Watertown and the North Country to update the boards of **WOGWF** and **MELT** about his work on their behalf in Malawi and to meet supporters and speak at area churches. Sam also received computer training and had time to enjoy the autumn colors. He was interviewed along with **Heather White** on WWNY TV about MELT and was the focus of an article in the Watertown Daily Times. Learn more about his visit at <http://www.wwnytv.com/clip/1379312/malawi-early-literacy> and <http://www.watertowndailytimes.com/ogd/malawi-man-visiting-north-country-to-thank-donors-for-helping-african-widows-20171029>.

**Check us out on the web!**  
**[www.WomenOfGraceWidowsFund.org](http://www.WomenOfGraceWidowsFund.org)**

# 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 2018 as we work toward our goal of raising **\$16,800** 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 financial support 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 \$\_\_\_\_\_.

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City/State/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

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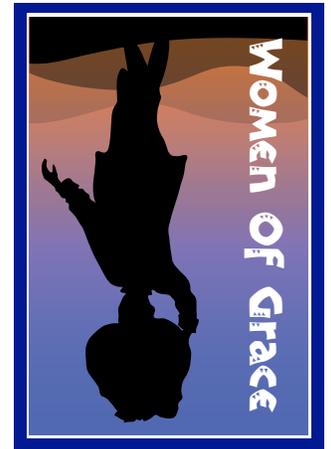


**Please send future Newsletters (twice a year) via email (in PDF format).**

**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, Attn:WOGWF, 17 Park Street, Canton NY 13617.



**Women Of Grace Widows' Fund**  
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