

# Women Of Grace Widows' Fund



A Joint Mission Project of Watertown and Canton First Presbyterian Churches

Winter 2013/Spring 2014

## 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 - Opening Pathways To Literacy

Year two of the *Keys To Education Literacy Program* saw a team of four teachers, **Julie Bonisteel, Julia Gefell, Barb Eldridge** and team leader **Heather White**, return to Malawi in May 2013 to assess the progress of the program by meeting with teachers and students. *Keys to Education* is a **\$34,000 three-year grant** specifically dedicated to **improving literacy** for Malawian children awarded to the Women Of Grace Widow's Fund by the **Presbyterian Women** (an independent organization within the PC USA) which funds this grant through its **"Thank Offering."**

Materials to replenish supplies and train teachers were brought over in **14 trunks** with each weighing **50lbs**. Materials included books, ABC cards, 1,000 Easy Readers, pocket chart calendars, learning song kits, scissors, posters, phrase cards, markers and math fact cards. During their 10 day stay they worked in six primary schools: **Chivumu Kanininga, Chibwaka, Michenguatuba, Monstanto** and the **Clint McCoy Center**. Each of these schools proudly showed off their **new cabinets** and refinished **chalkboards** which were provided by *Keys To Education* funds.

At each school they encountered creative and hardworking teachers (many who walk nearly **two hours** to their classrooms) who all were using strategies learned at the 2012 workshop to teach

classes of **80 or more** students. One teacher had found **torn cardboard** to create more words for her pocket chart and another had brought in **tree branches** to display her word cards.

**Sam Chirwa**, the *Keys To Education* Field Manager, provided introductions to the Headmaster at each school, and at these meetings team members learned that some schools kept the new materials under lock and key to "take proper care of them." "We assured them that the materials are to be used and are expected to **get worn and a bit dirty**," said White.

At the schools, *Keys To Education* members co-taught in the classroom with the Malawian teachers and presented the new materials. They met students who crowded into classrooms to sit on dirt floors, without chairs or desks, who brought **enthusiasm** and a strong **desire to learn** to their schoolwork.

This experience culminated with a **full-day workshop**, where teachers received their professional packets, group lessons and opportunities to ask questions and receive feedback. Good-byes were not said because the teachers and students are looking forward to **2014** when *Keys To Education* returns for its final year in improving literacy in their classrooms. **Tentative plans** for 2014 call for Heather White to return in July with one teacher to run the final *Keys To Education* workshop and one or two board members to work exclusively on Widows' Fund projects.

## Thank You (Zikomo!) To Our 2013 Donors!

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• **Mom Prom 2013** - Canton  
• **Prom Dress Sale** - Canton  
• **Raffle Basket  
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**Your generosity is  
greatly appreciated!**

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

## Pigs, Purses & Beds

These three projects have been in the forefront of the Women Of Grace Widows' Fund work over the past year. All three projects reach out to the **60 widows served by the Widows' Fund** in the villages of **Michenguatuba, Mbowe, and Mzenga**. Michenguatuba is a small city, Mbowe is about a 20 minute drive outside of Michenguatuba in an agricultural area, and Mzenga, where the Clint McCoy Center is located, is a remote, small village accessed by a two hour drive through the bush on rough roads.

The women in each village are working together to raise a **herd of 6 to 8 pigs**, some of which they hope to sell while putting the rest to use as food. This project creates a cooperative learning environment for both the younger and more elderly widows.

**Four women** in Mbowe are being trained in **basic sewing** and currently offer a small collection of **purses** for sale sewn from the colorful Malawian Chitenge material. Several of these purses returned with the members of the *Keys Of Education* team and are available for purchase. If you would like to **learn more** about the purses or find out how to **purchase one** to support a woman learning a trade in Malawi, contact **Heather White** at heatherwhite4@gmail.com or (315) 778-9867.

**Sam Chirwa**, Widow's Fund field manager, traveled to each of the three villages to meet with the 60 widows and **evaluate current needs**. It was decided to complete the **"Bed Project"** that had been started in **2008** when all of the widows of Michenguatuba received beds and bedding. We are now doing the same for the widows of Mzenga and Mbowe so these women, many of whom are elderly, can **sleep in a bed and not on a cold, damp, mud floor**. The bed frames are being constructed and **17 mattresses** still need to be acquired. **\$75 provides the bed, mattress, sheets, blankets, and delivery costs**. **Bed donations** can be made on the Women Of Grace website or by sending a check payable to First Presbyterian Church with **"WOG-Bed Fund"** on the memo line to the Canton First Presbyterian Church, 7 Park Street, Canton NY 13617. Thank you for your consideration of this project.

## We Want To Talk To You!

Since their return in May 2013, **Keys To Education** team has put together a **PowerPoint presentation** which illustrates the work which has been accomplished to date. The PowerPoint, along with videos of classroom visits and travel in Malawi, can be found on our website, **www.WomenOfGrace WidowsFund.org**. (Many thanks to **Andy Burns** of **SnakeTree Productions** who provides technical support and polish for all our digital presentations.)

We would love to **share with you both Keys To Education and updates about the widows we serve!** We will travel to you and **no group is too small**. The *Keys To Education* PowerPoint is about 40 minutes long. If you would like to **arrange for a speaker** for your church or service organization, please contact **Heather White** at heatherwhite4@gmail.com or (315) 778-9867 or **Linda Potter** at nautilus@twcny.rr.com or (315) 386-4364.

## Welcome To Barb!

. Welcome to **Barbara Eldridge**, the newest member of the Women Of Grace Widows' Fund board. *"I am very honored to be a member of the board for Woman of Grace Widows Fund. In May I was in Malawi as part of Keys to Education. The experience was both **rewarding and life changing**. I thought I knew how lucky we are to live in the USA, but this trip made the concept very clear. The people of Malawi work hard with the **struggles of life** to get through*

*each day only to do it again the next day. Yet, they all have a **smile on their face** in thankfulness that they are blessed with each day. While in Malawi I met with the widows*



*groups. They are beautiful women who need our support to help get them through the daily struggles of living in Malawi."* Barb is **retired teacher** from the Watertown City School District, who taught kindergarten, second grade, third grade and reading. She is now an adjunct instructor of reading at Jefferson Community College and is also a certified yoga instructor.

# Women Of Grace Widows' Fund 2013 Photos

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



Sam Chirwa, WOG Field Manager, leads a tour of the pig project.



Julia Gefell & Barb Eldridge teach at the Monsanto Primary School.



Women from the Michenguatuba Widows group.

"Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity,"

-Titus 2:7

Keys To Education materials being put to good use.

Sample purse made by widows at Mbowe training site.



# Easy As A•B•C

As part of their final trip in 2014, the *Keys To Education* teachers plan to distribute **Malawian Linking Cards and Alphabet Books**. Each letter will be accompanied by a representative photo which was taken on their 2013 trip. The *Keys to Education* group hopes to print and distribute **3,000** copies of the cards and books so Malawian children can learn the alphabet through objects they see in their homeland.

Like in the USA, "**A**" is for **Apple** in Malawi (imported from South Africa), **B** is for **Banana** and **C** is for **Carrot**. **Z** is for **Zebra** in both countries but you can actually see them in the wild in Malawi.

You can make a **donation** to support this and all of the efforts of the *Keys To Education* grant. Send your check payable to "First Presbyterian Church" and mark "**WOGWF-EDU**" on the memo line to, First Presbyterian Church, 17 Park St, Canton NY 13617.

# 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. In conversations with the Mzenga widows group this past May, a request was made for the Widows' Fund to **increase its contribution by one additional day** per week. This represents **\$750/year** to feed the **nearly 90 children** who come to this center. If your church or organization would like to make a **designated gift** to cover the cost for the feeding the children for one additional day at the Clint McCoy Center, please indicate that with your donation or contact Women Of Grace Board member **Linda Potter** at [nautilus@twcny.rr.com](mailto:nautilus@twcny.rr.com) or (315) 386-4364. Thank you for your consideration.

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## 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**.

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**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 2014 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**