

Presbyterians Sharing . . . October 2011 Update

Presbyterians Sharing is the national fund supporting the mission and ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada.



Left: Ian Paton gets to know a family in Nicaragua. **Right:** Janelle Yanishewski with another youth steward at the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation in Kingston, Jamaica.

Youth in Mission

Your gifts to *Presbyterians Sharing* help youth experience and share in mission through Youth in Mission Programs. YIM teams experienced mission in Nicaragua and travelled to Palestine and Israel to learn about building peace in the Middle East. We sent one youth to act as a steward for the World Council of Churches and another participated in the Starpoint festival in Hungary. In addition, youth groups went to Winnipeg Inner City Missions and Cape Breton.

Janelle Yanishewski shares her learnings and experiences as a steward at the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation, May 17-25, 2011.

As a university student studying peace, conflict and equity issues, the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation sounded right up my alley. Set in Kingston, Jamaica, this conference brought together Christians from around the world to discuss issues surrounding peace, justice and the role of the church, as a way to celebrate and mark the end of the World Council of Churches' Decade to Overcome Violence (2001-2011). Volunteering to be a steward was my way to get in. Little did I know the long hours, paper cuts and sore feet that lay ahead.

I was one of 45 international youth stewards who joined a group of local stewards to serve as the hands and feet of the conference. With over 1000 people attending,

this was quite demanding at times! But I discovered that providing a headset for translation, helping a person find their Bible study group, or simply giving a friendly smile could have a large affect on a person's day.

The experience was a grand one. I met youth and adults from all over the world, made new friends and was introduced to a new global community of faith. Growing up in a rural Presbyterian congregation in northern Alberta and attending a Presbyterian church in Toronto, I realized my faith perspective was very Presbyterian. Spending two weeks with Christians of all varieties opened my eyes to the wonderful diversity that exists in the ecumenical community and the joy that can come

Presbyterians Sharing

Goal for 2011: \$8,300,000

Received by Sept. 30, 2011: \$4,469,488

Received by Sept. 30, 2010: \$4,479,306

Thank you for your faithful support of *Presbyterians Sharing*. Let us continue to work and pray together as we encourage congregations to reach and surpass their commitments in 2011.

Youth In Mission 2011

from working, playing and fellowshiping together.

I was given a new image of the Christian faith; a global Church. The conference broke down denominational barriers. I worked with other young adults from around the world who came from various backgrounds and denominations. Although we were not always in perfect harmony, conflicts often stemmed from differing personalities and never created situations where friendship was lost. Ecumenism may test and try, but the value of the community created is worth the struggle. We share common goals according to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and by working together we can reach farther and do more.

The convocation focused on four areas: peace in the community, peace in the marketplace, peace with the earth and peace among the peoples. Additionally, much discussion surrounded justice and its necessity in building peace.

The conference helped me to reflect on the role of the church and ecumenical community and the times it has been complicit in maintaining systems of injustice that hold us all back from living in a peaceful world. The Presbyterian Church in Canada has worked hard to repair the damaged relationship with Aboriginal people, but these people remain as one of the poorest and most underprivileged groups within Canadian society. Churches use energy to heat large, poorly insulated buildings, impacting the planet. Churches buy and use computers, laptops and cellphones when the resources used in making these items fuel conflicts elsewhere.

Conflict is a part of human nature, but it does not have to become violent, or lead to physical, mental or emotional harm. In a world where power and money rule, the teachings of Jesus are easily ignored or seen as irrelevant. Jesus' teachings were radical yet the church and its congregations do not challenge current cultural practice, too often buying into and continuing the existing systems. It is a tricky area where the church becomes complicit in acts of violence through its acceptance of societies' ways, but a church that runs counter to culture may lead to alienation of many of its members. If we live for love then we must move away from what the global North says is 'normal,' and reject consumerism and money as things of great value.

The IEPC created a forum where these issues were discussed, possible solutions were shared and new networks built. The results of these discussions are available for reading in the final document, which will be presented to the WCC General Assembly in Busan, South Korea in 2013. However, it is the participants and their actions wherever they are that will determine whether the IEPC results in real change.



Top: Canadian youth visit with a family in Hebron at the Sabeel Youth Conference in Israel and Palestine. **Middle:** Rebecca Reyecraft with Nicaraguan youth supported through PWS&D programs. **Bottom:** Fiona Harper (far left) with ecumenical youth at the Starpoint Festival in Hungary.



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