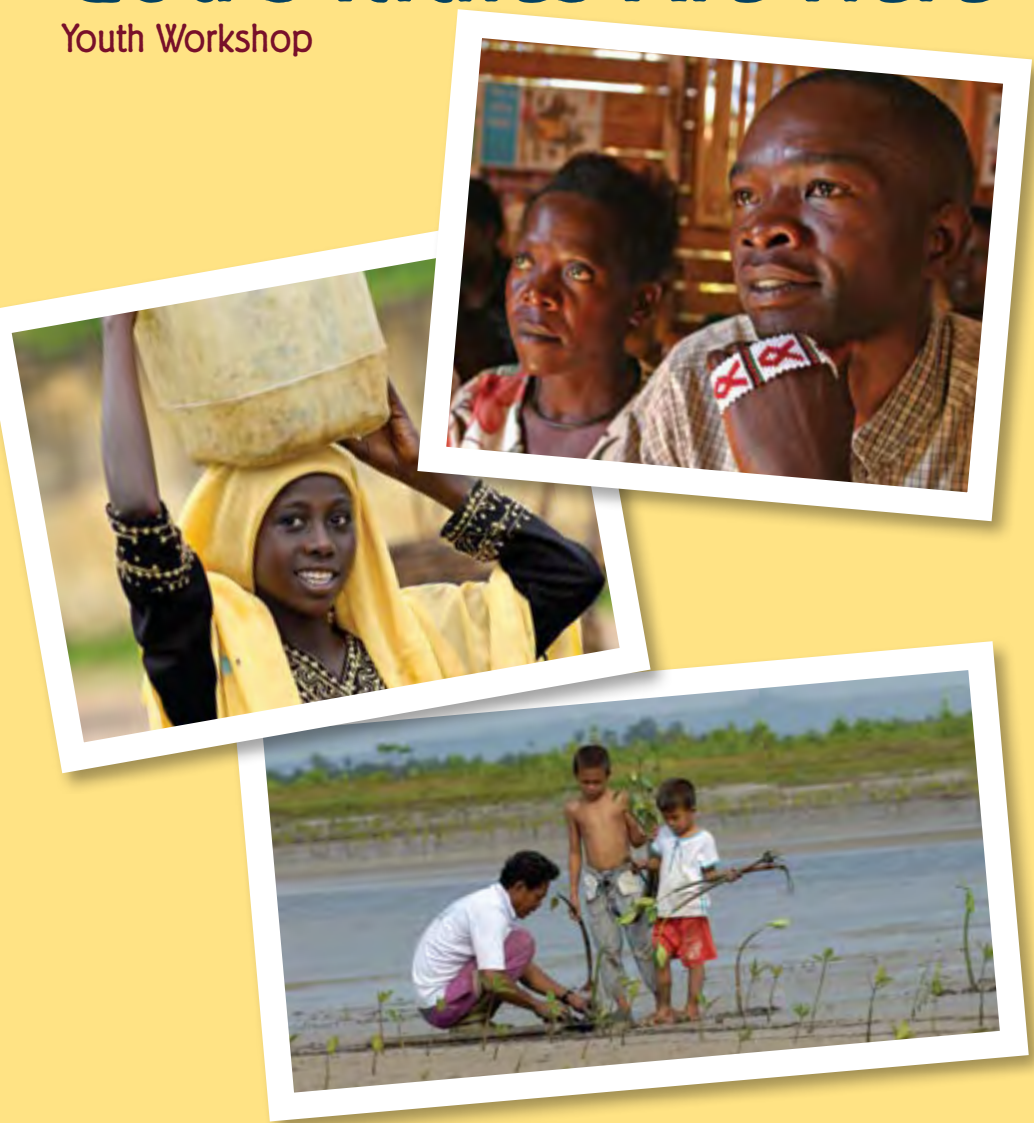


Believe It!

God's Riches Are Here

Youth Workshop



Mission and Service Fund
World Development and Relief
The United Church of Canada/L'Église Unie du Canada



Believe It! God's Riches Are Here

Youth Workshop

The theme of the 2009 World Development and Relief campaign is: Believe It! God's Riches Are Here. Additional WDR materials are available from UCRD: offering envelope (CH10633), poster (CH10634), bulletin cover (CH10635), Lenten calendar (CH10636), and a worship resource (CH10637).

Introduction

This workshop is designed for youth ages 12 and up. Its purpose is to help participants understand that God has given to us abundantly, that God's riches may be different from those of a consumer culture. The workshop takes two to two-and-a-half hours to complete.

The World Development and Relief resources this year show that all of us play a role in making sure people everywhere in the world enjoy the many riches God has provided. Our choices do matter. In the Book of Genesis, we are told that God created the world and called it good. This is a core value of our faith: that God has created a world that sustains life. God has given us all the things that we need to survive and thrive.

Yet we know that God's riches are not equally shared around the world because some people have more than others. People in one country have much more than those in another country. Decisions we make as consumers in Canada affect the lives of people in other parts of the world.

We live in a culture that prizes spending. People are evaluated on what they have and are encouraged to buy their way to happiness. We are taught to throw away the old and acquire the latest and newest gadgets. This lifestyle choice has caused pollution and waste-disposal issues.

Background and Getting Started

To learn more about consumerism, leaders should preview *The Story of Stuff*. This 22-minute video looks at lifestyles and how our choices matter to the whole world. It is produced under a Creative Commons licence, meaning you can show it to the youth group and other people in your church free of charge. The only condition is that the film must be shown in its entirety.

NOTE: This video is **not** available from UCRD. It is available free of charge at www.storyofstuff.com.

For information on youth and consumerism from a Canadian perspective, take a look at Julie Kinkaid's *Overturing the Tables: Consumerism, Children, and the Church*. This UCPH book can be ordered from UCRD (ISBN: 978-155-134167-5). The book outlines how parents, youth leaders, and young people can take action to change their own practices and those of others. These efforts are most effective when supported by the community—for example, by church groups.

Supplies

- a copy of the “Need, Want” chart (page 16) for each participant
- a flip chart and markers
- appropriate equipment to show *The Story of Stuff*, e.g., a computer and projector
- a copy of *Overturing the Tables*
- lots of different advertisements cut from magazines and newspapers

These may also be helpful:

1. TransFair: a Canadian site that promotes fair trade products:
<http://transfair.ca>

You can contact them by mail at:

TransFair Canada
328 Somerset St. West
Ottawa, ON K2P 0J9

2. KAIROS: an ecumenical co-operative that promotes justice and human rights in Canada and abroad. They produce educational trading cards. To order the cards, go to **www.kairoscanada.org** and type “trading cards” in the search engine; then click on the “KAIROS Trading Rights” link.

You can contact them by mail at:

KAIROS
Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives
310 Dupont St., Suite 200
Toronto, ON M5R 1V9

Workshop

Opening Prayer

Loving and Holy God, you created the world and called it good. You created the lush forests, the rich soil, and the seas and lands filled with many different animals, and again you called it good. You created us all as unique individuals, yet we can celebrate how we are all made in your image. You call us to live in partnership with one another and with you. You call us to be the caretakers of your creation. Be with us now as we begin to think about your riches. Be with us now as we begin to think about the work of overseas partners of The United Church of Canada. Give us your wisdom as we wonder about what we really need, what we want, and what good choices we can make. This we pray in the name of Christ. Amen.

Discussion and Activities

Chart It Out

1. Ask the youth to complete the “Need, Want” chart. They may check more than one box for each item. Then lead a discussion about our needs and our wants.
2. Tell the story of creation, Genesis 1:1—2:3. Ask the youth to name God’s riches—the ones they heard described in the story and others they can think of. These may include fresh air, clean water, arable land, family and friends, teachers, faith, natural resources, and more. Write down their suggestions on the flip chart.
3. Read 1 Samuel 16:1–13. Ask the group to think about ways our choices and God’s choices might differ. What do the youth honour and value? What does God honour and value? Write down this list on another page of the flip chart.

4. Ask the group to think about what society expects and values, and what God's choices are. Write these down on a page of the flip chart.
5. Play *The Story of Stuff* or read selections from *Overturing the Tables*. Lead a discussion to find out what the young people learned from this material. Make notes on the flip chart.

Leaders: *The point is not to make the youth feel guilty about what they have but to help them begin thinking about what decisions they can make around what they have and buy, and how they use the things they have. What makes something a need? Do we need a new computer every other year or can we wait longer to make a purchase? Do we need a new cellphone right now or does the one we have still work? Do we need new sweaters or are the ones we have perfectly good? Do we always throw things out or do we reuse, reduce, and recycle?*

Act Out a Story about Stuff

1. Divide the youth into groups of three or four.
2. Discuss the material in the "Our Stuff" box (page 7). Then ask the youth to choose a topic for a skit. They can use a topic from the box or make up their own.
3. Give them about 10 minutes to make up a skit—just two or three minutes long—about possessions.
4. Take turns presenting the skits.
5. After all the groups have presented, ask what everyone learned about how we value things. Do we own our things or do they own us? Write down the responses on the flip chart.

The Power of Advertising

1. Have the group look at the magazine and newspaper advertisements.
2. Ask the youth to decide whether the ads are promoting items that are necessary for life, items we can't imagine life without, items we already have, or items we would like to have.
3. Ask: Do advertisers encourage us to make our own choices? Do the ads encourage us to make decisions as God would?
4. Discuss the purpose of advertising. What is it for? What does it encourage us to buy? Does it influence our decisions and our lifestyles? Should we resist it? Why? How?

What Is World Development and Relief (WDR)?

WDR is a branch of the Mission and Service Fund. When you give to WDR through the M&S Fund, your money goes directly to global partners.

Depending on the amount of time you have, read and discuss one or both of the stories about our work with global partners in Colombia (page 8) and the Philippines (page 12).

Our Stuff

We all have stuff—things we have collected over the years for one reason or another. However, we often find we have too much stuff, and decide we want to get rid of some of it.

Natural resources are used to produce stuff. Manufacturing stuff and transporting it to stores uses a lot of energy (produced by electricity, coal, gas, diesel, etc.). This causes pollution.

When we think it's time to replace something or buy something new, we can ask ourselves:

1. What do I really need?
2. How do my needs and wants affect other people?
3. How do they affect the environment?
4. Do I really need to replace my stuff? Could it be repaired instead?
5. If I am upgrading, should I give away my old stuff so it can be used by someone else, or should it go in the garbage? And, do I *need* that upgrade?

Here are some suggestions for a skit:

- You are an advertiser trying to sell the latest cellphone to people who don't think they need one.
- You are a couple attempting to get rid of stuff in your attic.
- You are the ghost of stuff past.
- You are a family who lives on a tight budget. You make barely enough money to pay for food and rent, but the teenagers want iPods.
- You are trying to convince your friends to reduce, reuse, and recycle.

Justice and Life Project, Colombia

Colombia is a country that has a great deal of God's riches. Although known primarily for coffee and the drug trade, it also has large reserves of oil, gold, platinum, and uranium. The country is known for its biodiversity—10 percent of all animal species can be found there.

Colombia is home to nearly 46 million people. Wealth is unevenly distributed among them, with the wealthiest 1000 families controlling 53 percent of the land and nearly 50 percent of the population living below the poverty line. Ten percent of the population has been forced to leave their homes due to the civil war.

Civil war has been a constant in Colombia for the past 50 years. The government and armed groups battle to control land and natural resources. The fighting has forced about 10 percent of the people to leave their homes. Paramilitary death squads (who often have a connection with the government army) routinely kill innocent citizens, and hundreds of others disappear each year. People live in fear and anxiety.

Because of the civil war, human rights and services suffer. For instance, although education is provided free to all children in the country, many children cannot go to school because their families, impoverished by the effects of the war, have no money to pay for uniforms, pencils, and other supplies.

Mining companies often throw people off their farms so the companies can access natural resources on the land. Because government regulations and environmental laws are much less strict there, the mining companies find it cheaper to extract minerals in Colombia than in other parts of the world.

The jewellery, electronics, and plastics that we buy here in Canada often contain natural resources produced in Colombia. We can buy these goods inexpensively because millions of Colombian citizens have paid for them with the loss of their land, and by suffering the effects of living in a polluted landscape. By throwing out perfectly good items just to have the most up-to-date devices, we increase the demand for natural resources, which causes the mining companies to search for more cheap materials, which leads to greater hardship in places like Colombia. Our choices as consumers affect the lives of people around the globe.



Displaced women in San Pablo, Magdalena Medio region, Colombia. Photo by Darren Liepold, March 2009.

Colombians who have been made homeless by the war often live in the poorest conditions. Above you can see a group of women who have been forced to flee their farms. Families of as many as seven people live in each of these small (about 650 square feet) houses.

The women left their farms and came to a squatters' camp in San Pablo in the Magdalena Medio region of Colombia because war had destroyed their crops. Most of these women are the sole adult in the household; their husbands and older sons were forced to fight (or have been killed) in the war. Land mines in the fields make farming deadly. While only a few farmers plant coca (from which cocaine can be derived), many farms have been destroyed because the government sprays poison to kill the coca plants, ruining other crops.

The women in San Pablo work together to produce tortillas to sell. They earn about 60,000 pesos a month—less than \$30—which is far less than the minimum wage. Their homes have no electricity or water. The police and army try to make them leave San Pablo, but they have nowhere else to go. They are often victims of violence, and their homes are frequently flooded by the nearby Magdalena River.

It is difficult to see God's riches here. These women and their children know poverty and hunger. They do not always have clean water to drink. They may be evicted from their shacks at any time and be homeless once more.

They cannot afford to send their children to school. Their children risk being kidnapped or being killed by a land mine.

But amid all these dangers, the women find hope. They have realized that together they have a much stronger voice than if they spoke alone. They protect one another, watch out for one another's children, and together face whatever life puts before them. They want only a few things: protection of human rights, justice, to be able to return to their homes, to be reunited with their families, and to live in peace.

The Colombian government, to attract tourist dollars and foreign investment, is telling the world that it is safe to travel and invest in Colombia. It is trying to convince the world that the war is over and all is fine. The women of San Pablo know this is not true. War and violence continue to affect their lives.

The women of San Pablo are supported by a United Church partner, the Justice and Life Project, which calls on the Colombian government to protect human rights. The Justice and Life Project works with partners overseas to ensure that these women are not forgotten.

God has blessed the people of Colombia with a lush, beautiful country. If Canadians make more thoughtful choices as consumers, maybe the women of San Pablo and millions of other Colombians might come to share in God's riches.

For further information on Colombia, see the United for Peace page on the United Church website: **www.united-church.ca/getinvolved/unitedforpeace/advocacy**. (Scroll down and click on the link "Colombia: A Country of Paradoxes.")

Source: www.united-church.ca/getinvolved/unitedforpeace/advocacy

Colombia: Discussion Questions

1. What did you learn from this story?
2. Canada is now considering free trade with Colombia. This means that there will be increased trade between our countries. To accomplish this, the mining companies will be taking more land from farmers and causing more pollution so Canadians can buy more, and cheaper, goods. Do you think this is a good or bad idea? Why?
3. What choices can we make that would benefit the women of San Pablo?
4. Each year The United Church of Canada, through the M&S Fund and the World Development and Relief Fund, sends over \$5 million to our global partners. That is a lot of money, yet there is a need for even more money. Can you think of a way your youth group or congregation might raise more funds for M&S and WDR?

The Philippines: A Story from Our Partners

The Philippines is an island nation in Southeast Asia. It has been a colony of Spain and of the United States. From the beginning, Filipinos resisted the colonizers and struggled for freedom from imperial powers. In 1896, the Philippine revolutionary movement declared independence from Spain. In 1898, without the knowledge of the Filipinos, Spain ceded the Philippines to the United States for \$20 million under the Treaty of Paris. The country gained independence from the United States in 1946, although the U.S. continues to have strong influence over the Philippines' economy and political affairs.

The Philippines has a population of 97 million, the majority of whom are Roman Catholic. It is a developing country rich in mineral resources. There is also a strong agricultural industry producing rice, corn, sugarcane, coconuts, abaca, tobacco, mangoes, and watermelons. President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo hopes the country will be economically developed by the year 2020.

The Philippines has long been a centre of conflict. Its government has been at war since 1970 with members of the National Democratic Front, and also struggles with the Moro population, a group of Muslim people mainly located on the island of Mindanao. There is a wide gap between the very rich and the very poor of the country. Latest reports show that about 44 percent of the population lives on less than \$2 a day. Recent increases in the price of food will push more and more people into poverty.

Two million Filipinos have been made homeless by the war. More than a thousand people in the past decade have been executed or "disappeared" because they were considered enemies of the state. The Philippine government justifies these murders and disappearances by claiming it is supporting the United States in its "war on terror."

The Philippine government describes all those who oppose the government as terrorists, including not only members of the National Democratic Front but also church workers, peace activists, and labour and farm leaders. Filipinos who resist harmful government policies and actions have no human rights. They face threats and violence, and are denied social services.

Canada trades \$1.2 billion worth of goods with the Philippines each year. Much of the clothing and electronics that Canada buys from the Philippines has been produced in factories where workers face awful working conditions

and are paid horrible wages. We get to purchase cheap goods from the Philippines because of the sweatshop conditions many workers endure.

The United Church of Canada partners with several churches and interfaith groups, including the United Church of Christ in the Philippines and the National Council of Churches in the Philippines. Our partners seek to convince the warring parties to lay down their arms and negotiate a true and lasting peace. They support human rights activists and church leaders in the call for all citizens to be treated equally. They call on the Philippine government to respect the human rights of all its citizens. They call on other countries, such as Canada, to ensure that their relations with and activities in the Philippines support this goal.

For further information on the Philippines, see the United for Peace page on the United Church website: www.united-church.ca/getinvolved/unitedforpeace/advocacy. (Scroll down and click on the link "The 'Forgotten Conflict' in the Philippines.")

Source: www.united-church.ca/getinvolved/unitedforpeace/advocacy

The Philippines: Discussion Questions

1. The Philippines has been blessed with many natural resources. Yet 44 percent of the population lives on less than \$2 a day. The Philippine government does everything it can to maintain the status quo in the name of combatting terrorism. Where is the good news in that?
2. We like to buy inexpensive goods. Do you think Canadians would be willing to pay more for products if it meant that workers in all countries were paid a fair wage?
3. Where are God's riches in these countries?
4. What decisions can we make as consumers to improve the lives of others?
5. Each year The United Church of Canada, through the M&S Fund and the World Development and Relief Fund, sends over \$5 million to our global partners. That is a lot of money, yet there is a need for even more money. Can you think of a way your youth group or congregation might raise more funds for M&S and WDR?

Conclusion

Ask the youth these questions:

1. What are the main ideas you have discussed?
2. What have you learned?
3. Have the activities of this program affected how you will make choices about buying things and about your lifestyle?

Closing Reading

May be read by the leader, or youth may take turns reading it paragraph by paragraph.

Our faith tells us that God created the world and said it was good. If we truly believe that, then we must affirm the conclusion: Believe it! God's riches are here.

We have seen how God's view of riches and society's view of riches differ. God created the world and called it good. God gave us air to breathe, food to eat, and water to drink. God gave us talents to love and serve one another and to serve God. Everyone has been created in God's image. Everyone has value. Everyone is invited to an equal share in creation.

The dominant culture in Western society tends to look at things in terms of monetary value. We are worth only as much as we can spend. Some people are worth more than others because they have more money. The earth is here for us to exploit. Some people seem more deserving than others. It's okay that many suffer so a few can enjoy abundance.

So we need to make a choice. Which is more important to us? To live as God would have us live, valuing everyone? Or to live in a world where people are judged based on what they own

and what they can buy? Do we make choices that ensure that all might live in rich abundance or do we buy just because we can afford to and say “Who cares about anybody else”? Do we make choices that sustain life or choices that harm the environment?

God has given the world more than it needs to survive. We are called to be stewards of God’s creation. If we learn to reduce, reuse, and recycle, we are making good choices. If we make thoughtful decisions about what we buy and how we dispose of items, we help ensure that God’s riches are everywhere, for everyone.

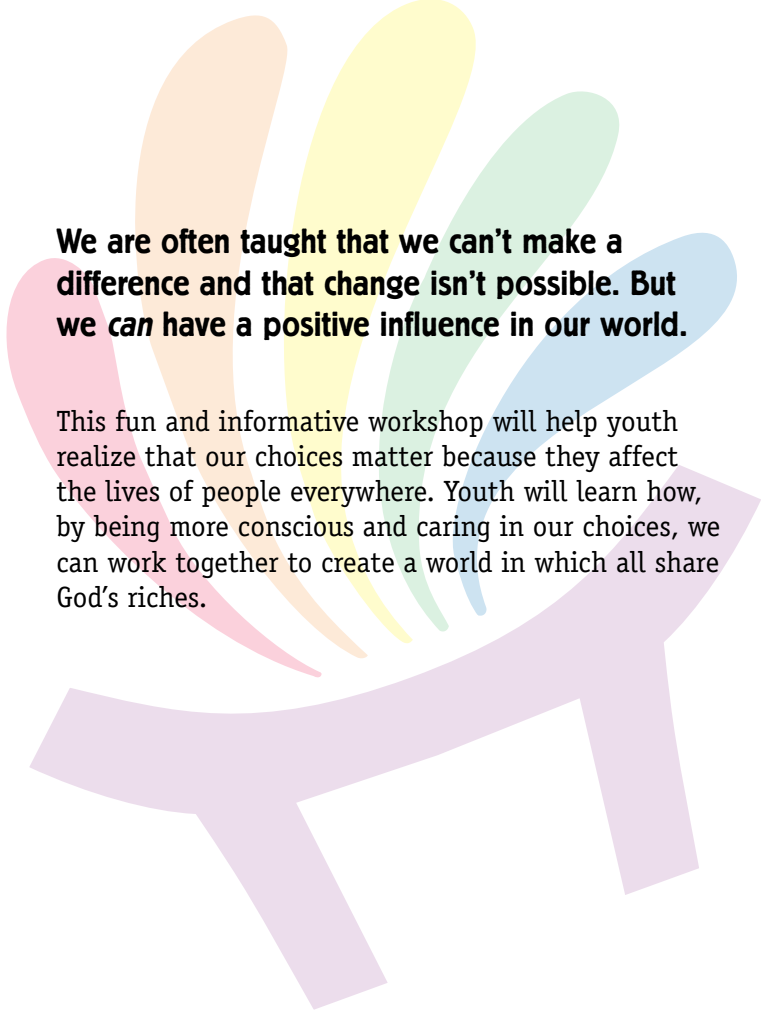
Closing Prayer

God of every good thing, for all that you give us, we give you thanks. We know there is nothing we really need that we lack. For the gift of your grace which brings us together as a people, we give thanks. We know that, together, there is nothing we can’t do. For the gift of our minds and for our imagination, we give thanks. May we make wise decisions that benefit the whole world. May we realize that when one hurts, all hurt. May we all believe it! Your riches are here. Amen.

Need, Want

Put check marks in the boxes to indicate the importance of the items in the left-hand column. You can check more than one box for each item.

	Already Have	Can't Imagine Life Without	Necessary for Life	Would Be Cool to Have
Arable Land				
Barbecue				
BlackBerry				
Clean Air				
Clean Water				
Creativity				
Designer Jeans				
Dishwasher				
Education				
Electricity				
Family Car				
Fast Food				
Flat-Screen TV				
Friends and Family				
Game System				
Healthy Food				
Heating and Air Conditioning				
Home Computer				
Indoor Plumbing				
iPhone				
iPod				
Jewellery/Makeup				
Justice and Equality				
Microwave				
Music				
Stereo				
Washer/Dryer				
Winter Clothes				



We are often taught that we can't make a difference and that change isn't possible. But we *can* have a positive influence in our world.

This fun and informative workshop will help youth realize that our choices matter because they affect the lives of people everywhere. Youth will learn how, by being more conscious and caring in our choices, we can work together to create a world in which all share God's riches.

CH10661

Front cover photos, from top: Carl Hiebert/Presbyterian World Service and Development; Paul Jeffery; Paul Jeffery

© 2009

The United Church of Canada/L'Église Unie du Canada
3250 Bloor St. West, Suite 300
Toronto, ON M8X 2Y4 CANADA



This document is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution Non-commercial No Derivatives (by-nc-nd) Licence. To view a copy of this licence, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.5/ca>. Any copy must include this notice.

090296