



September 26, 2010

### **MINUTE FOR MISSION – SOMETIME IT HURTS TO GIVE: PAKISTAN FLOOD RELIEF**

My Minute for Mission this morning is about how sometimes, it can be difficult to give. I want to frame this in the context of the international Pakistan Flood Relief campaign that the UCC is a part of. I suspect that some of you won't be keen on hearing about this; after all, the response in Canada and around the world to this devastating natural disaster has been lagging far behind previous campaigns.

Before I remind you about the need, let me quote some lines from a book called "New Seeds of Contemplation" by Thomas Merton. Merton died in 1968: he was a Trappist monk and ordained priest. He was a student of comparative religion and a prolific writer on spirituality and social justice. He writes:

"Do not think that you can show your love for Christ  
by hating those who seem to be His enemies on earth.  
Suppose they really do hate Him:  
nevertheless, He loves them, and you cannot be united  
with Him unless you love them too."

The floods in Pakistan have killed more than 1600 people, destroyed more than 3.5 million homes, displaced more than 4.6 million people. The situation there has been described by the UN as the worst humanitarian crisis ever. In terms of the number of people affected, the Pakistan flood exceeds the combined impact of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami and the 2010 Haiti earthquake. Things are expected to get worse as disease, malnutrition and starvation take effect.

Around the world, aid response has been slow and modest, to say the least. The UCC member donations as of early September were under \$100,000. This compares poorly with the Haiti effort where the totals were over \$2 million in a similar period of time. The reasons for such donor reluctance have been debated – some say it is due to distrust of the Pakistan government and its reputation for corruption and sponsorship of terrorism. Some say it is because the flooding developed over such an extended period of time...there was no single, sharp incident of crisis to attract donor attention. Others say it is due to donor fatigue. Whatever the reason, international response has been meagre.

I'm calling on everyone to reconsider their ability and intentions to make a donation to this relief campaign. The Canadian government offer of matching funds has been extended to October 2<sup>nd</sup>. If you are concerned about how the money will be spent and by whom, I encourage you to make your gifts through an accredited relief organization that has actual representatives on the ground in Pakistan. There are many of these and the UCC is one of them. There is no surer way to ensure that money gets into the hands of those in need, not only in the immediate term, but in the long term, when reconstruction and rebuilding are required.

You can make your donation on-line at the UCC website: [www.united-church.ca](http://www.united-church.ca) or you can do it through your envelope by designating "Pakistan Flood Relief" on the memo portion of your cheque or on your envelope.

Pakistan may not be a country that gives us a warm and fuzzy feeling...it is a country that was born in crisis in 1947 and one that is in our recent consciousness for all the wrong reasons. But I know we are a generous and charitable congregation – notwithstanding what we might think about Pakistan's background and reputation, or, perhaps because of it, we ought to take Thomas Merton's message to heart and think of how we can help others in need.

Thank you for your ongoing support to M&S and other Christian giving campaigns.