



FLC Prayer Concerns 2019

JANUARY: NUTRITION

January 2019-2028, United Nations Decade of Family Farming

Worldwide, women are at much higher risk than men of poor nutrition. As a result, they are also more likely to develop anemia and related health complications. In 2011, the World Health Organization estimated anemia affected about 30 million non-pregnant women, 56 million pregnant women and 293 million pre-school children, globally.

Anemia develops when there are too few functioning red blood cells. Risk factors include genetic disorders, diseases, infections, blood loss from menstruation and giving birth, or the nutritional demands of lactation. Without enough red blood cells to deliver oxygen to them, the other cells of the body are unable to create the energy needed for optimum health and activity.

Due to many cultures' preferences for sons, girls and women often receive less food than boys and men. Yet they are expected to work hard, do chores, raise children, and care for the elderly. Anemia can cause pain and fatigue, mental changes and low birth weights. Chronic anemia taxes the lungs and heart.

"Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me." (Matthew 25:40, NRSV)

Dear God, come into our hearts. Help us to care for girls and women so they can have clean water, adequate nutrition, iron supplements, mosquito netting and a chance to live healthy lives. Help us to do something for and with those whom the world considers "the least." This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Dr. June M. James, O.M., Winnipeg, MB.

FEBRUARY: EDUCATION

February 1, World Day of Women and Girls in Science

"One child, one teacher, one pen and one book can change the world. Education is the only solution. Education First." Malala Yousafzai spoke these powerful words when she spoke to the first ever UN Youth Takeover in 2013.

As a teacher for 35 years, Malala's words touched my heart. She reminded me of the times I watched children learn skills that would benefit them for the rest of their lives. She reminded me of the times I witnessed children realize their own potential.

Studies have consistently shown that girls who receive an education can pull themselves and their families out of poverty and also benefit their communities. Yet two-thirds of the world's uneducated or illiterate are girls and women. As a result, girls' and women's needs, rights, and

freedoms are not always represented or upheld. The education of girls anywhere should be a concern for women everywhere!

Heavenly One, Creator of all, touch the hearts of parents so that they can support and encourage the education of their children—boys and girls. Place a blanket of protection on little ones who cannot attend school due to poverty, wars, human trafficking, child marriages, discrimination, and abuse. Place a deep desire in us to develop caring communities and safe classrooms where children can blossom and learn. Great Teacher, teach us ways to uplift girls and women in our families and society. We ask for all of this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Donna Shaddick, Brooklin, ON.

MARCH: GIRLS EMPOWERMENT

March 1, World Day of Prayer

March 8, International Women's Day

I am Charlise, an 11-year-old grade six student, a young missionary and a member of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Toronto.

I have travelled with my mom and grandmother to Chennai India, Abu Dhabi, Chicago, New York, and Dominican Republic. Everywhere we go, we meet young girls who are beautifully and wonderfully made. They are confident, smart and can brighten up anyone's day with their smiles. They make me excited about what God has in store for the future.

In the Bible it says "I can do all things through him who strengthens me." (Philippians 4:13, NRSV) These words encourage me to try to make a difference in the lives of girls, especially things that might help them learn.

I appreciate this opportunity to pray with the members of the Fellowship of the Least Coin and I hope my words will encourage other girls and you, too.

Dear God, please keep encouraging us to do something good for other people. Please give us ideas and the courage to ask others to help us. Please keep girls' faith strong. Please help girls know that you love them unconditionally. Amen.

Charlise LeMasurier, Toronto, ON

APRIL: CREATION

April 22, Earth Day

Suriname is a beautiful, tropical South American country that is home to diverse people and a wonderful abundance of vegetation and wildlife. As the writer country for the World Day of Prayer 2018 service, the women of Suriname reminded us that "All God's Creation is Very Good!" Even though World Day of Prayer 2018 is over, it is important that we do not forget their words and

prayers. Global warming is still an environmental crisis and climate change is still a harsh reality that disproportionately affects communities, cities, and countries in the Global South.

Take time to reflect! The WDP service urged us, as Christians, to re-evaluate the effect that our actions have on all life on the planet. Ask yourself: Over the past year, have I made changes in my daily habits or routine to protect the Earth, the air, waters, and trees? Over the past year, have I shown love for my neighbour (humans and other creatures) in how I use and conserve resources? Over the past year, have my actions matched my faith?

Creator, thank you for the Earth—this generous gift of life that you have given to us. We thank you for the deep seas, vast grasslands, towering mountains, lush rainforests, and everything in between. Forgive us for neglecting to take care of this gift. Call on us to reduce our individual and collective carbon footprint. Help us to embrace and live with great respect for your creation. Amen.

Lauren Wilks, Thorold, ON.

MAY: DIVERSITY & HOSPITALITY

*May 16 International Day of Living Together in Peace,
May 21 World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development*

My late husband, Gordon, and I hosted international students beginning in 1976. They came from different cultures and had different religious beliefs, practices, values—and food! They started as strangers but soon became our extended family. We took them with us on weekend outings, to family reunions, birthday parties, Christmas and Easter celebrations.

When we hosted Iranian students, their parents were surprised that Christians would host their Muslim children. I told them that we regarded their sons as God's children and were happy to have them in our home. We respected and accepted all of our students for who they are.

In 2010, Gordon and I travelled to visit our international family. It was our pleasure to meet their families and accept their hospitality. When Gordon passed away suddenly in 2015, I asked some of them to be pall bearers at the funeral. I felt honoured that they accepted my request even though, for some, this was their first Christian service.

My faith has been stretched, strengthened, and grown; my horizon has widened; and my life has been enriched beyond my expectations through these encounters with people of different cultures.

Our loving God and Creator, help us to show respect and establish positive relationships and share your love which we have experienced through Jesus Christ our Saviour with people of different cultures, faith and languages that we meet at work, in social circles, on our travels, and our daily interactions. May we follow Jesus Christ in all things and in all ways through the Holy Spirit who guides us. Amen.

Nettie Dueck, Winnipeg, MB.

JUNE: IMMIGRANTS

June 20, World Refugee Day

Nisha is a college graduate who worked as a secretary-bookkeeper in Ethiopia before arriving in Canada twelve years ago. Nisha earned a business degree, but she continues to have difficulty finding a job with good conditions and pay to support herself and her mother. Her income as a payday loan clerk covers rent for a room and public transportation. To survive, Nisha and her mother often rely on the local food bank and the generosity of their landlord.

Nisha's painful struggles are far more common than many immigrant women are willing to share. Their stories are often muted, and their marginalized status does not afford them the political agency to be heard. As God's people, we are called to accompany struggling immigrants like Nisha, and to participate in God's redeeming work in Christ. "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour" (Luke 4:18-19).

Dear Lord, give us the grace to share your compassionate love with our immigrant neighbours who long to be released from the pain of rejection, marginalization and poverty. Forgive us for our indifference and ignorance. Awaken us anew to your call to love our neighbour (Luke 10:27), to welcome the stranger (Matt. 25:35-45), and to love the foreigner who lives among us (Deut. 31:12). Give us willing hearts to step out of our comfortable lives to be with the struggling immigrants in our communities, especially vulnerable women, to serve them at great cost, as Christ, our Lord and Saviour, demonstrated on the cross. Amen.

Marian Nacpil, Toronto, ON.

JULY: HUMAN TRAFFICKING

July 30, International Day against Trafficking in Persons

"Those who oppress the poor insult their Maker, but those who are kind to the needy honour him." (Proverbs 14:31, NRSV.)

Human trafficking is the recruitment and control of a person for the purpose of sexual exploitation, forced labour, or debt bondage. Human trafficking deprives people of their rights, freedom, independence, and self-respect. Indeed, their very humanity is stolen.

In 1990, twenty-two people who were committed to ending the sexual exploitation of children met in Thailand. After five days of deliberation, End Child Prostitution in Asian Tourism (ECPAT) was created. Twenty-eight years later, ECPAT has expanded into a network of 104 member organizations in 93 countries to protect and support children who are vulnerable to, caught in, and survivors of sex

trafficking. However, the demand for sex trafficking has also expanded. It is now an industry that exploits 21 million people (mostly women and girls) and generates \$150.2 billion in illegal profits.

I recently met Timea Nagy, a survivor of human trafficking and the keynote speaker at an ECPAT conference in Winnipeg. Timea was a teenager when she emigrated from Hungary. She was promised \$1000 a month to work as a nanny. However, when she arrived, she was forced into sex work. Eventually, she was able to escape. She now works with law enforcement officers to stop others from being trafficked.

God of compassion, we pray for all of the women and children who have been trafficked and are vulnerable to being trafficked. May they have protection, support, and wholeness. May they regain their voices and their lives. God of justice, we also pray for those who prey on vulnerable people, and exploit and deny them their freedom. We pray for those who buy and demand sex from trafficked persons. May their hearts be truly changed and their eyes opened. May they repent for the pain, trauma, and loss that they have caused. May your justice and healing flow. In your name, we pray for the millions of people deeply affected by human trafficking. Amen.

Diane Dwarka, Winnipeg, MB.

AUGUST: CHILDREN'S CAMPING MINISTRY

August 12, International Youth Day

Jesus' life is the epitome of servant leadership and he calls us, his followers, to the same lifestyle. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me...for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs. And he laid his hands on their heads and went on his way." (Matthew 19:14-15, NRSV.)

Camping ministry is an opportunity to bless children. The ultimate goal of camp is to give children tools to succeed in life—courage, empathy, a positive attitude, and the experience of being part of a team. Camps teach children about Jesus, instill values, build relationships, grow leaders, and welcome people into God's Kingdom, one child at a time. This can happen through biblical teaching, climbing ropes, swimming, riding mountain bikes, or worshipping around a campfire.

Serving our youth is an essential ministry. To invest in camping ministry is to place our hands on children and bless them, which in turn blesses whole families and communities.

God, parent to us all, thank you for children. Thank you for the opportunity to model your love and grace towards them. We pray that you will empower leaders who serve in camping ministries this summer. Give them patience, love, and creativity in serving children. We pray for the children who will attend camp. May they come to know the depth of your love. May they be inspired to serve you and spread your love to their families and the communities in which they live. May children and leaders alike know your blessing! We ask these things in the powerful name of Jesus. Amen.

Major Tina Rideout, Toronto, ON.

SEPTEMBER: SENIOR WOMEN – HEALTH ISSUES

September, World Alzheimer's Month

“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.” (Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.)

Whilst there are many areas where senior women could use assistance, health care comes to the forefront, especially mental health issues such as depression, dementia and Alzheimer's.

The Alzheimer Society of Canada shares the fact that 564,000 Canadians are currently living with dementia. (More than 747,000 with Alzheimer's and other dementias.) In 15 years, that number will be close to 1 million. Of those diagnosed with dementia over the age of 65, 65% are women.

Currently, older women tend to have fewer financial resources, fewer years' experience in the workforce and less experience managing family finances, compared to older men. Accordingly, today's older women may be less able to pay for supportive care and to access health services that are not being funded.

The National Strategy for Alzheimer's Disease and Dementias Act only recently received assent on June 22, 2017. There is still much work to be done for the effective healthcare of those living with these diseases.

Heavenly Father, accept the prayers we offer for senior women with health needs. We pray that they will have access to the care they need and that those who are unable to speak for themselves will be treated with compassion and kindness. We pray for the caregivers, the advocates and the decision makers and ask that you will guide them in their work and decision-making. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

Anita Gittens, Etobicoke, ON.

OCTOBER: MENTAL HEALTH

October 1-7, World Mental Illness Awareness Week

October 10, World Mental Health Day

Around the world and in our own families, women and young adults can find themselves in the depths of despair with no one to share their burdens:

- The hopelessness that leads to the growing epidemic of suicide amongst our young people;
- The rawness and pain of broken relationships;
- The reduction of our interactions to small screens of anonymity that also reduce our manners and empathy;
- The grief of those who have lost children to the ravages of addictions, illness, war or famine;

- The torment of refugee women fleeing bullets and bombings with babies and children tied onto their backs;
- The suffering of immigrant women separated from their children at the US border after risking all to give hope and dreams to their loved ones.

Jesus says, “Come to me, all you that are weary and carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11: 28-30, NRSV)

Christ sees the depth of our pain, shoulders our burdens and offers us grace. A yoke is designed to share the load between two beasts of burden. Jesus shoulders more than his share as he walks beside us carrying our load.

Loving God, equip us to offer kind words that cheer. Teach us to be gentle and humble in heart, with others and ourselves. Amen.

Rev. Steph McClellan, Lewisporte, NL.

NOVEMBER: ADVERSITY

November 25, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

November 29, International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People

November 30, Day of Remembrance for all Victims of Chemical Warfare

I met Christina when she came as a guest to an Out of the Cold dinner. She entered alone, sat alone, did not speak to anyone, and left alone. After several months, she began to open up and speak to one or two women. They invited her to an occasional women’s event at church. There, she gradually told her story. Christina lives alone, is recovering from a violent, abusive relationship, and still finds it hard to interact with men. However, she has joined a Bible Study group that includes women and some gentle, caring men, and she is slowly learning to speak about her faith.

I met Cecilia when I visited her remote village in Malawi. She became a widow when her husband died of HIV/AIDS. She carries the virus herself and, for three years, she has been living with breast cancer. Four of her children have died and she supports the remaining four by picking up whatever work she can. She is deeply committed to serving her community as deputy to the Chief of the village, who is also a woman. She is a member of her church’s Mvano, or women’s guild, and she wears her uniform proudly. Last but not least, Cecilia can dance! When she dances, in Mvano or in worship, her faith is plain for all to see.

Dear God, we lift up all of the Christinas and Cecilians of the world. May they have a safe, warm, accepting place in what can be a cold, unwelcoming world. May we show them that they are loved and cared for in the community of God’s family. Amen.

Cathy Reid, London, ON.

DECEMBER: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

December 6, National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence against Women (Canada)

Home should be a sanctuary; a place to rest and be restored. (Read Proverbs 17:1, 24:3-4.) Yet, for many women, home is a place of fear and abuse. In Canada and many other countries, domestic violence has consistently been reported as one of the most common forms of violence against women.

While statistics show a decline in marital abuse since 1994, due to the rise in women's economic independence, instances of abuse between common-law partners is increasing. Indigenous women and younger women aged 15-34 are at a higher risk of abuse. Unfortunately, due to fear of retaliation and death, only 30% of domestic violence cases are reported to authorities. Creating a world and communities without violence against women begins with working to end violence in the home.

Over 2000 years ago, Jesus' last commandment to his disciples was to "love one another" (John 13:34-35, NRSV). As followers of Christ, we can start by having a conversation about love in our families, congregations, and communities. We can donate to local women's shelters to support women who have courageously left abusive relationships. For information on addressing domestic violence and responding to survivors, you can access WICC's online resource "Restore: Ending Violence against Women" at wicc.org/restore/.

Loving God, help us to love one another and stand together, as your people, to end domestic violence in our homes and in our world. Help us to love and support women in abusive relationships and those who are in shelters. Help us to pray and work everyday for a world where women are safe, loved and cherished for who they are. Amen.

Valerie Hobson, London, ON.

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