UNITINGWORLD

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Goats ~~GIFTS~~ BEYOND YOUR WILDEST IMAGINATION

This is one of the best gifts in the catalogue. **Yes, it's goat poo. Yes, it's cheap.** But it represents so much more than you can imagine!

Off the beaten track in Bali's mountain region, six-year-old Ni Luh is enthusiastically mucking in alongside her parents, feet snug in a pair of well-worn pink gum boots.

Among Indonesia's poorest communities, her family struggle to afford basics like gas for their cookers, oil, rice and anything that varies their diets from the little they can grow.

But today, they're tending to a large pile of goat manure, improving it ready for sale to the local coffee farmer, who lets them live and work on his land.

The manure, lovingly produced by the family's goats, will improve the coffee yield. The coffee, in turn, will be sold by the farmer and our local church partner, who'll use the profits to invest back into the goat project. And Ni Luh will go to school thanks to the profits the family make from their participation in UnitingWorld's partner project in livestock breeding.

Circle complete. Your gift of goats (or goat poo!) has real legs. It feeds into training, support and the animals themselves – and it begins a cycle that can break the shackles of poverty. For good. More than that, it's a gift that gives dignity and hope to people who are capable of everything we dream of for our own families – they only need the opportunity.

Want to imagine something even bigger to invest in this Christmas? **Educate a girl.**



When Maryam's parents told her they would no longer be able to afford to send her to school, withdrawing her instead to work as a domestic labourer for a nearby landlord to earn money for the family, she was devastated.

Her dreams of becoming a doctor were dashed – her marks were good, but with four other children to support, her parents simply couldn't afford school fees, uniforms and books.

UnitingWorld's partner, the Diocese of Amritsar, runs a hostel for girls that enables them to study nearby safely and affordably. With the church's help, Maryam was able to return to school and wrote to us recently: "I am so grateful to all the people who are supporting us. I pray that God will fulfil all their heart's desires and give them happiness. Thanks to you, children like us can get a proper education and aim to be successful in life."

One more girl educated in India almost certainly means better outcomes for a whole community. When girls are educated, they marry later, have fewer children and can earn incomes that mean their own families will almost certainly have completely different futures.

Imagine that: one gift shapes generations.

FOLLOW YOUR IMAGINATION

Buy gifts that change lives this Christmas
www.everythingincommon.com.au

UnitingWorld
connecting communities for life

UnitingWorld is the international aid and partnerships agency of the Uniting Church in Australia. Together we work for a world where lives are whole and hopeful, free from poverty and injustice. Because every person matters.

THE DETERMINED FACE OF HOPE



A few months ago we wrote to you with stories from our diverse range of projects in India, prompting many of you to give generously to the work of our partners seeding the gospel and sharing hope with thousands.

Jane and Dan, our staff overseeing the work, have recently returned inspired by time spent with men and women who are right on the frontline of the ministry.

"Om Prakash (Amritsar Dioceses) is amazingly committed – he recently threatened his local government with a hunger strike and said he would lock all the schools his project works in if they didn't provide teachers and books within 15 days," Jane says.

"The Minister of Education met the group's demands – not least because Om also organised protest rallies and ensured the media made a noise too. Quality education for Dalit caste children, especially girls, is hard to find, but our partners are advocating hard and holding authorities to account."

Your generous donations to our Hope Has Many Faces appeal is helping us support schooling for 300 children in a remote area, as well as provide 30 girls from very disadvantaged backgrounds with accommodation, education and nutrition.

Due to the sudden onset of the Sulawesi Emergency, we are experiencing a serious shortfall in the funding for these projects. If you can still donate to our ministry in India, we would be extremely grateful. Every gift gives hope to our partners and the people they serve.

REFLECTING ON THE THEOLOGY OF GENDER EQUALITY IN THE PACIFIC

UnitingWorld hosted its annual five-day workshop on Gender Equality Theology in early November.

Led by Pacific theologians Rev Dr Cliff Bird and Sierra Bird, ministers from partner churches across the Pacific met in Nadi, Fiji, to wrestle with biblical themes of equality and anti-violence. They discussed how principles from the Bible can be powerful forces for positive change in their communities, where violence against women continues to be a significant problem.

Participants expressed their appreciation for what they learned throughout the week and committed to taking the knowledge back to their home churches.

"The teaching tools have given me more clarification for deeper biblical analysis and identifying the root-causes of social issues," said Rev Tomasi Tarabe, New Testament lecturer at the Davuilevu Theological College in Suva.

"I hope UnitingWorld continues to work with Pacific theologians on developing a methodology of reading and interpreting the Bible through our cultural lens."

Participant Victoria Kavafolau, a theology student and newly appointed head of the Women's Desk for the Tonga National Council of Churches, spoke about how her expectations for the event were turned around.

"Before I participated in the Gender Equality Theology workshop, I thought 'oh, this is just another program advocating women's rights.' To be proven wrong was an understatement... Not only did it raise awareness about violence against women and children, but the workshop provided tools and resources for theologically interpreting and identifying gender equality within Scripture and how we can apply that to our relevant contexts," said Victoria.



Victoria Kavafolau (right) with UnitingWorld Program Manager Megan Calcaterra and Rev Lima Tura, a previous UnitingWorld scholarship recipient who is now a lecturer at Seghe Theological Seminary in the Solomon Islands.

"This is an important area within our respective Oceania communities to be addressed and enriched. We are in a different era now with different worldviews and contexts. Our cultural values and customs often deter us from developing further perspectives on gender equality.

This program has impacted me at a personal level and has encouraged me to address this growing issue within my Tongan community. With the aid of UnitingWorld and the tools and resources they have provided me, hopefully change can be implemented according to the will of God. Praise be to God."

The Partnering Women for Change project is supported by the Australian Government through the Pacific Women Program.

KNOW WHERE YOUR DONATION GOES

A few years ago, the story broke of a charity set up in Liberia by a young American woman who wanted to start a school to provide girls with an escape from the misery of the sex industry.



The organisation had raised thousands of dollars. Unfortunately, the school project was poorly supervised and a staff member was found to be sexually abusing students in his care. The story, sadly, is far more common than it should be. Why?

It usually happens when people haven't invested in the experience or resources they need to fully safeguard those they want to help. When you trust UnitingWorld with your donation, we use every cent to create genuinely life-giving opportunities for vulnerable people.

That work has many layers – fully funding projects; implementing rigorous child protection policies; appropriately paying local, qualified experts to design and oversee project effectiveness; going over our books with a fine-tooth comb to make sure each dollar is accounted for; and always seeking to improve our practices.

Your donation does all this. This is what it takes to responsibly partner in the complex work of changing lives – for good. You're not just sharing in the immediate wins. You're also designing, monitoring, investing and reporting back to make sure that the people with whom we work are always offered the best ideas, the best resources and the utmost respect. **Thank you!**

THE HUMAN COST OF DISASTER

Our partners of the Protestant Church in Bali have travelled to Sulawesi to work with communities devastated by September's earthquake and tsunami.

More than 70,000 people were evacuated after the disaster – each has a face, a story. Children sleep at night without parents; parents without children. Our partners, too, are traumatised by the work of moving through these lives – gifted tales of bravery and resilience as they distribute mosquito nets, tents, tarps, water pumps and kits for clean water.

Your donations of $65,000 are being used in two hard to reach areas of Palu and Sigi, where the team are assessing people at high risk, including women, children and those with disabilities. The priorities aren't just physical but emotional – the team are helping local counsellors and church members with trauma response as well as prioritising health and shelter.

Thank you for so generously responding to Indonesia's earthquake and tsunami.



Our partners helped a community install a water pump that will provide clean water for 86 families in Kulawi, Sulawesi.

AUSTRALIA IS NO EXCEPTION

The Australian Council For International Development (ACFID) recently commissioned an independent review into their members practices for the prevention of sexual misconduct.

The final report found 31 substantiated sexual misconduct cases involving aid workers over a three-year period.

Though UnitingWorld had no reportable incidents, National Director Dr Sureka Goringe says UnitingWorld endorses all the recommendations made by the report.

"While we already have strong processes for preventing sexual misconduct, we are committed to learning from this review and improving our practices."

"Any case of sexual misconduct is completely unacceptable. Our sector must do better."

You can find the full statement on our website.



This photo of a teddy bear found in the rubble and shared on Instagram by one of our workers drives home the human impact of the tragedy.

"Dear little one, I do not know you, neither do I know whether you are safe or not…" reads the caption. "Let this teddy bear of yours be the witness and remembrance of how courageous you were."

FINDING COURAGE IN A FEARFUL WORLD



If you've ever been worried about the state of the world and your place in it, you're not alone. We live in a time of high anxiety; one in five Australians experiences some form of mental illness in any given year, and one in four reports feeling lonely, without friendships or community to support them.

In the lead up to Easter 2019, as we consider what it means to be followers of Christ, UnitingWorld invites you to draw courage and inspiration from our brothers and sisters in Timor Leste, and from a series of reflections on courage from Uniting Church state moderators.

As always, Lent Event will call us to end poverty and build hope together. From March to April, find courage to act in a fearful world: live simply and be inspired by those building God's kingdom. As we hear from courageous people both here and in Timor Leste, be assured that God goes before us in the world.

Visit the website to check out a range of resources you can use as an individual or a congregation during Lent, and sign up to daily short reflections on courage and Christ's call: **www.lentevent.com.au**

Every dollar you raise and donate changes lives for people living in vulnerable communities in Timor Leste and beyond.

NOTES FROM THE NATIONAL DIRECTOR



In the Pacific and Asia, there's no polite way to turn down a meal. Hospitality is everything and everywhere, lovingly and lavishly prepared—sometimes for days—and open to all. Time and expense are rarely part of the equation as men, women and children hunt and gather (often literally) and then throw wide their arms and doors to make sure everyone enjoys the feast.

This is life among our partners, and I've been blessed to be part of it over the past few weeks, attending the Pacific Conference of Churches in New Zealand as well as the General Meeting of the Christian Evangelical Church in Minahasa (Sulawesi).

My experience is food for thought as Christmas approaches, sharply dividing us into those who relish the opportunity to kill the fatted calf with all the ceremony it involves, and those who dread the arrival of relatives and over-priced hams in Coles.

Justine Vogt says that hospitality is, "making your guests feel at home, even if you wish they were."

Less precociously, Henri Nouwen suggests "hospitality is not to change people, but to offer them space where change can take place." He calls us to make our homes and lives places where even those with whom we have little in common feel able to be heard and intriguingly, open to personal transformation. While many of us feel caught up in making sure that every detail of the culinary experience we offer in our homes is perfect, he suggests genuine hospitality is about the readiness of our hearts to deal with difference, to extend grace, to find those who are lonely and create for them a place of freedom that leads to change.

What a tantalising possibility! How delightful that rather than simply feeling slightly bloated post-Christmas Day, we might feel energised and open to change as a result of our time together!

Viewed this way, I'm reminded of the many acts of hospitality carried out by our partners in so many ways and places throughout the year. As they visit hard to reach areas with resources like goats, small business training, health education or workshops for women, they create relationships that are acts of true hospitality – spaces in which people are heard and create change for themselves.

As you contemplate Christmas this year, I encourage you to reflect on this kind of hospitality. As God sent Jesus into the world to be among us, may your hospitality reflect the presence of the Spirit of Love and the opportunity to seed real change. Thank you so much for the generosity each of you has extended to our partners this year; you've provided people with opportunities to bring hope and dignity for themselves and their families through countless gifts made in times of crisis and as long- term givers.

Wishing you the joy and love of Christmas and always,

Sureka



Dr Sureka Goringe,
National Director, UnitingWorld

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UnitingWorld connecting communities for life

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