

# GROWING Together

ISSN: 1920-8677

## A LONG-TERM PROJECT

Faithfulness. When a mother wakes up to a sick child, wipes tears, and lies awake until the child falls back asleep, she is faithful. A young boy who keeps his promise to an elderly lady that he will rake her leaves in the fall is faithful. Believing in someone or something is only a part of what it means to be faithful. Faithfulness requires our passion, our energy, and most of all, our long term commitment. We live in a culture where faithful perseverance is often sidestepped in favour of instant results, personal gain, or an easier way. As Christians, however, faithfulness is the road to change in our lives. Even more, it is a way we participate in God's change in the world.

Sometimes, faithfulness requires us to believe in a vision and set of possibilities that seem well beyond reality. God promised Abraham and Sarah, in old age and barrenness, that their descendants would number as the stars (Gen 15:5). God invites us into the faithful journey of being family, even though the blessings of conceiving and supporting children come with risk and the possibility of deep loss. Many couples grapple with infertility. Some families have buried children; others have children missing or in prison. God, who lost the Son to violence, invites us to a faithfulness that transcends even suffering and death.

Aboriginal women have been going missing in Canada for decades without the same kind of media or police attention given to non-Aboriginal women. The family members and loved ones of these women keep holding vigil, continue to call attention to the situation, and persist in prayer for missing mothers, sisters and daughters. The solutions to systemic racism and societal indifference are not clear, easy or immediate. In this context, faithfulness means an ever deepening appreciation of the dignity of each missing woman. To be faithful is to continue to be moved by each loss, even though ignoring it would be less painful. It is faithfulness to our families and communities that makes us more compassionate and allows God to bring justice and healing where it is most needed.

Many modern-day champions of justice inspire us to be faithful. Mother Teresa spent her life serving the poorest of the poor while she endured periods of spiritual desolation. Canadian Craig Keilburger founded Free the Children at age 12 to put an end to international child labour and is still campaigning ... a decade and a half later. Faithfulness enables otherwise ordinary people to accomplish extraordinary things. As followers of Jesus, we are not always privileged to have the fullness of God's vision, to grasp the end goal or to live to see the fruit of our labour.

Our inability to see instant or even long-term results from our efforts is often interpreted as failure and experienced as suffering. St. Paul's letter to the Romans reminds us of the faithfulness of Abraham and Sarah, who placed their hope in God. We can also "rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope" (Romans 5:3-4). We can rejoice because the future of the world does not depend solely on us: "The kingdom is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision....We plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise....We are prophets of a future not our own."



### Related Scripture Passages:

Psalm 26:3 *"For your steadfast love is before my eyes, and I walk in faithfulness to you."*

Psalm 100:5 *"For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures for ever, and his faithfulness to all generations."*

Hebrews 10:23 *"Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful."*

### Questions for reflection:

1. When is faithfulness to God effortless for you? When does it become difficult?
2. What blessings have you experienced in being faithful to God even when it might be easier to abandon God's vision?
3. Where have you seen ordinary people make extraordinary contributions by their faithfulness?

GROWING TOGETHER is a series of five Sunday bulletin inserts for the ecumenical education of Christ's faithful.

Prairie Centre for Ecumenism  
600 - 45th Street West  
Saskatoon, SK S7L 5W9  
CANADA © 2011



phone: (306)-653-1633  
fax: (306) 653-1821  
email: pce@ecumenism.net  
www.ecumenism.net