

MINUTE FOR MISSION (to accompany *Joining Hands* insert)


Dignity can't be purchased. However, lack of funds does prevent many people in the world from achieving even a foothold on dignity. This is particularly true where a rigid social system fixes one group of people in place at the bottom of the ladder. After a while, they almost begin to think it's their proper role to have other people stepping on their hands every time they try to grasp a slightly higher rung. Then it takes a miracle of some kind for them to break free of this cycle of poverty and despair.

The story you have in your bulletin insert today is about Rana, a woman whose commitment to feeding her mother and three other women in her family brought her to the point of knowing she could not accept the continuing injustice that came her way as a woman, as a Dalit, and (as those two statuses almost certainly imply,) as a person without financial resources. Yet, even knowing this, she needed to join with others before she was able to achieve any change. But by joining with other women in similar situations, she actually increased her livelihood by more than 400 percent!

That change surely came from Rana's will and determination, but it was also made possible by networks of partners that help groups of poor people discover the power of mutuality, of working together. Many such networks have been painstakingly developed through your gifts to One Great Hour of Sharing. The Presbyterian Hunger Program works with Chethana, the partner in India that helped develop Manushi, the network that helped Rana improve the lives of her family. Chethana works with a variety of groups to make differences in hundreds of lives.

Many of their groups are focused on helping Dalits or other lower caste Indians to organize to have the laws enforced that assure them access to small plots of land. Often these laws are ignored because the powerful don't feel there is anyone to force them to obey, but when the poor organize, they become a force to be reckoned with.

Jesus instructed his disciples, "Feed my sheep." But he also showed them that often, by putting together what may seem meager individual gifts, people are capable of making miraculous changes in their own lives. Through this simple power of mutuality, a few loaves and fishes became transformed into a feast of sharing of love that fed a huge throng. In this season when we celebrate the lessons Jesus taught us all about the power of sacrificial love, we have the chance to begin that process of transformation. This is the time when we consider our gifts to One Great Hour of Sharing. When all of us give what we can, God transforms us all beyond the roles of giver and receiver into a circle of sharing and love. Today, let us celebrate that miracle by giving as generously as we know how.



Jesus said, "Feed my sheep."

Joining Hands

What one miracle of grace has done for poor, sad women in India, your family and other people are achieving for them in the states of the world.

Where in this time have you given? Dalit women — who belong to the caste considered unclean — have even fewer rights and the additional burden of your giving. Imagine what you would do if, after your thanksgiving, the letters you gave for these states of grace your mother said there were still more to do but you have no way to reach them.

They feed through a network of women and farmers who shepherd the lives of Dalits and help them survive. So they will live and eat and fill their lives.