

Notes from a sermon given at Christ Church Vancouver, B.C.
Oct. 3, 1999 by Andrew Ignatieff

PWRDF & TRANSFORMATION

Thank you for your interest & support of PWRDF. Lucky to be able to speak to Anglican Church Women about PWRDF within framework of today's reading.

From first chapter of Genesis, Bible is filled with wondrous images of water. This reading about Christ and woman of Samaria among the finest living water.

Living water - how our faith can transform water into a living thing.

“The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life”

John 4.14

Water to revive flagging spirits to renew life, water to transform ourselves, our world, our surroundings.

The reading is also about a meeting, making connections, communicating ideas, building faith.

When you look through the imagery, you find an encounter between two very different people - a visionary philosopher and a practical, down to earth working woman.

Through her discovery of faith, her life is transformed, but first & foremost, she is practical, experienced in the real world - well is deep, there is no bucket & (my favourite) otherwise, have to keep coming her to draw water.

This woman of Samaria is like women I have encountered at wells in countries around the world - experienced, practical, realistic, down to earth.

Women as agents of social change, of social transformation.

PWRDF working with women world wide in keeping with PWRDF goals & guiding principles to work for justice to increase opportunities for growth in human dignity & potential and the right of people to change societal institutions.

When I read later in our reading that the apostles were astonished that Christ was speaking to a woman, I was reminded of our recent GAD workshop.

PWRDF GAD policy emphasizes transformation. Gender & development (GAD) being the study and analysis of socially determined relations between women & men. But also study & analysis & action on the social, economic, political, cultural forces that determine access to, benefit from, control over resources, decision making & action.

In the reading, Christ reaches out across boundaries of gender & ethnicity (Jews & Samaritans) to reach & speak directly to the woman of Samaria.

She is transformed by the experience so too, the PWRDF reaches out across boundaries of distance, geography, language, ethnicity to work with our partners to transform their lives, in so doing our lives are transformed.

PWRDF works through a shared commitment with our partners & belief in women's empowerment.

- women's & men's sense of internal strength, confidence to face life's challenges
- right to make choices
- power to control own lives
- ability to influence the direction of social change

PWRDF Examples

- NWT fashions using native traditions
- Ojibwa women working to create space for themselves in community life, decision making structures, economic life
- Santa Marta cooperative, El Salvador
- Ethiopian Orthodox Church women's program-leadership, literacy, horticulture, micro-enterprise
- Assistance through ACT to assist war affected refugees in Albania & displaced in Kosovo

All these projects ensure that women enjoy their rights, feel empowered both individually and as a member of women's groups, women must be able to participate as equals in our own society and in countries around the world through work of PWRDF.

These are their rights, it is our responsibility to assist them in whatever way possible - financial assistance, networking, individual and systemic advocacy on their situations, their issues.

Through PWRDF, we must work for a world of peace, justice, respect for rights, equality.

In the words of another great biblical use of water as metaphor.

Let justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever flowing stream.
Amos 5:24