

MISSION MOMENT: GIFTS TO LIVE ON Girls' Education in Afghanistan

In Afghanistan, young women are now barred from education past the sixth grade. In a region historically familiar with the struggle for equity and liberation following decades of violence, generation after generation of Shia Muslims have been targeted, their basic human rights drastically restricted.

Some schools that still meet (remnants of education for young women in Afghanistan) are established and maintained by partners of Week of Compassion. Much like at schools anywhere, stepping into a classroom of kindergarteners is an energetic scene: students enthusiastically answering their teachers, embracing the opportunity of education, dreaming about their futures, young and optimistic.

In a sixth-grade classroom, students present prepared statements, eager and brilliant. Asked, "What are your dreams?"; a student replies, "Shattered." Her dream of being a pilot now distant, this sixth-grade year will be her last education and access to a classroom.

In another room, excitedly learning and reciting English, a student listens as visitors discuss the restrictions on education for young women and the impact on their lives and futures. Strong and resilient, as sunlight pours into the corner of her room and bathes her desk, she stands without hesitation and asks, "What are you going to do about it? What should we do?"

She is the dream of her mother, the hope of her ancestors, and a gift we all need. What do we do when a young girl's voice and story shatter our hearts?

Week of Compassion's work rests in core values of accompaniment, community and integrity - not only when it flows easily, but especially in times of crisis. Alongside global partners, Week of Compassion is expanding education for girls, bringing **GIFTS TO LIVE ON** in rural Afghanistan, communities that are marginalized and vastly underserved. Partners envision education centers, teacher training, parent and community councils, playgrounds, and school supply distribution, reaching more than 13,000 in outlying communities.



Such programs will increase girls' enrollment and access to quality education, and improve the whole system by building the capacity of teachers in a safe and friendly learning environment. **These are the fundamentals every student deserves. Week of Compassion continues to work with partners to bring this possibility to women and girls worldwide.**

Disciples have always been clear: When needs arise, we need to respond ... we need to be moved; we need to be generous; we need to be faithful; we need to be transformed.

We need to take on the role of the generous widow.

"... all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on."
- Luke 21:1-4 NRSVue

Jesus sees the widow and her gift, and rejoices in her generosity. Others were giving from what they could spare - but this woman, Jesus said, was giving everything she had to live on. Such generosity upends expectation.

When we give, we know that our gifts are not the only ones that matter - the true gift of compassion and connection lies in the resilience of the communities we serve. **GIFTS TO LIVE ON** live in the dreams of eager and bright girls going to school in Afghanistan.

In the generous widow, we see every Disciple who is part of Week of Compassion, and every person we hope to serve. Her generosity sparks a response in us: we give what we have, what we can offer as our very best, what is uniquely ours to bring. That's what Week of Compassion does - what Disciples do. We bring what we have to live on, which becomes a resource for others to live on - and that mutual giving is how our story lives on, too.



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