



## Imagining Another World Is Possible

# Imagining a World Without Discrimination and Oppression

**U**nited Church of Christ in the Philippines – Heights Christian Church (UCCP-HCC) is an exuberant community that embodies the UCC's core value of extravagant welcome: ***no matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you're welcome here.***

Heights Church, located in the city of San Jose Del Monte, understands justice, especially justice for children and families. Because their community is in the midst of a resettlement area, families suffer. So the church applied for and received a Neighbors in Need grant in 2012 to assist with the issue of structural poverty, in which children are deprived of their right to quality and accessible early education. The grant helped with the development of children's basic social and academic abilities as well as with providing a support system for parents, addressing parenting and job skills. Along the way, awareness is also raised around personal well-being and dignity as human beings created in God's image.

Imagining Another World Is Possible  
**2013 Neighbors In Need**  
Justice and Witness Ministries

Program Director and Lead Organizer, Rev. Alan Rey B. Sarte, shares a typical story of a family who benefitted from the Neighbors in Need grant. "Angel Mae (in red shirt in photo) is the eighth among eleven siblings. Her family's poverty has made it impossible to have Angel Mae study in school. Her father is a contractual construction worker with a salary equivalent to about \$9 USD a day, which is not enough to make both ends meet. But with the United Church of Christ in the Philippines Heights Christian Education Program, families in the resettlement community, where Angel Mae's family is living, have been provided quality and accessible early education."

For Rev. Alan and his community, the justice issues that his program addresses also include the promotion of respect and equality for all and the rejection of discrimination. It also addresses oppression as it relates to the issues of poverty, lack of basic health care and employment opportunities in a resettlement area. "Holistic care and teaching of ecumenical values of respect and equal treatment of boys and girls, women and men, as well as raising awareness of parent's rights and responsibilities, have also become part of the UCCP's ministry in the area," said Sarte.

To learn more about UCCP - Heights Christian Church and their program "like" them on Facebook.

**With your support, Neighbors in Need is Imagining a World Without Discrimination and Oppression.**



**Neighbors in Need (NIN)** is a special mission offering of the UCC that supports ministries of justice and compassion throughout the United States. One-third of NIN funds support the Council for American Indian Ministries (CAIM). Two-thirds of the offering is used by the UCC's Justice and Witness Ministries (JWM) to support a variety of justice initiatives, advocacy efforts, and direct service projects.



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### Imagining a World Without Hunger

Taking a stand against hunger on behalf of children and youth, the **Summer Lunch Brunch Ministry** strives to be a living crucible of Christ's care, compassion, and concern for families having difficulty feeding their children due to circumstances beyond their control. Offered by Pilgrim United Church of Christ (PUCC), Durham, NC, the Summer Lunch Brunch Ministry takes place for ten weeks, June through August, and provides a nutritious afternoon meal along with fun learning activities twice a week to neighborhood children, no matter their socio-economic background.

With the support of a 2012 Neighbors in Need grant, the Summer Lunch Brunch Ministry team's goal was to address the crisis of hunger among community children and youth while also cultivating relationships based on love and respect. In addition to a meal, activities are tailored to the needs of the participants, focusing on one-on-one language arts tutoring and group science experiments. Throughout, the team also supported local farmers and sustainable agriculture growing sources.

Imagining Another World Is Possible  
**2013 Neighbors In Need**  
Justice and Witness Ministries

According to Rev. Carla Gregg, PUCC Associate Pastor, during the summer of 2012, the Lunch Bunch Ministry reached 30 children. "It was a time for children of varying racial and economic backgrounds to come together for good food and good learning and practice respecting one another and themselves. In addition, 50 church members assisted in the Summer Lunch Bunch ministry over the summer by helping with children's activities, food preparation and clean-up."

"The day we made pizzas brought together a number of our themes and goals," says Rev. Gregg. "The children learned together what it takes to make a pizza, and they made them with fresh vegetables, including herbs they grew in their potted herb garden. Enjoying a meal they created themselves encouraged the children's independence, provided them skills in the kitchen, and information about healthy eating choices. They were able to practice literacy, science, and cooperation skills during the cooking. Plus, they all had a fabulous time! We did just what we hoped . . . provided a healthy meal and created community."

To learn more about the Summer Lunch Brunch Ministry, visit [pilgrimucc-durham.org](http://pilgrimucc-durham.org) or "like" Pilgrim UCC – Durham, NC on Facebook.

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## Imagining a World Without Poverty

Acting on their call to work for justice to enhance the lives of children and families, 2012 **Neighbors in Need** grant recipient, United Center for Caring of Jackson, MI, along with the Partnership Park Downtown Neighborhood Association and St. John's UCC held their annual **Community Baby Shower (CBS) and Baby Expo** in July 2012. This vital program, begun in 2007, has touched the lives of hundreds of low-income families in Jackson County. In 2012, more fathers than ever attended the event. Mothers, too, were excited to be offered a new opportunity to participate in a "Mothers Support Group" which offered parenting tips.

The CBS has grown over the years. Clothing for infants and children, strollers, baby toiletries and diapers, and portable cribs are donated—all with the goal of helping families to better care for their children. According to Donna Benedict, program coordinator, "Mothers were appreciative of the participating agencies that provided information and resources to the families. Participating agencies were appreciative of the contacts they made with the families. CBS offered opportunities

Imagining Another World Is Possible  
**2013 Neighbors In Need**  
Justice and Witness Ministries

to register to vote, healthy eating tips including recipes, and an understanding of how to sooth your child when they're crying."

In 2011, the Baby Expo was added. Ten local agencies provide literature that informs families of each agency's service and how to access them. A participating parent said, "The Community Baby Shower provided me and my baby support. Two weeks before the Baby Shower there was a fire in one of the apartments of the house I live in. There was so much smoke damage that I had to throw away a lot of things I had for my baby. The people at the Baby Shower gave my baby clothes, diapers, and a portable crib. They also gave me baby blankets and other essentials I had lost due to the smoke damage.

"I am forever grateful for the things they gave me. I don't know what I would have done without their help. This is a much needed outreach for our community. I didn't know there was such a thing as the Community Baby Shower until my counselor suggested I go. I feel that there should be opportunities like this in every community."

To learn more about this program visit: [www.stjohnsunited.org](http://www.stjohnsunited.org) or *like* Partnership Park Downtown Neighborhood Association on Facebook.

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## Imagining a World Without Violence

**2012 Neighbors in Need** grant recipient, **MADRE**, located in New York City, is an international women's human rights organization that works with community-based women's organizations worldwide to address issues affecting women, including physical, emotional and sexual violence. MADRE realizes that a cogent understanding of the social, economic, environmental, and political conditions that confront women is critical to a just society.

"MADRE works to educate widespread audiences about the impacts of policies put forth by governments, international financial institutions and other centers of power on women and their communities worldwide and to press for alternatives to destructive policies," says Executive Director Yifat Susskind. "MADRE focuses on reaching people and guiding them through the process of transforming their values into coherent positions in favor of women's human rights and justice. This enables them to take part in the debates that shape those policies and strengthen justice advocacy for affected communities."

Imagining Another World Is Possible  
**2013 Neighbors In Need**  
Justice and Witness Ministries

With the aid of a 2012 Neighbors in Need grant, MADRE was empowered to work with partners in Iraq to help amplify their voices and provide analysis surrounding the ten-year anniversary of the U.S. invasion. Additionally, they coordinated with a sister organization to gather and publicize stories of the impact of the war on Iraqi women and families. This public education campaign included an editorial written jointly by Ms. Susskind and the director of their partnering organization; a special webpage devoted to MADRE's public education related materials; and an interactive timeline of the past ten years of U.S. policies and practices in Iraq and their impact on women's rights.

"Thanks to your support, we were also able to gather updates about one community in Iraq called Haweeja, where families living in close proximity to a U.S. military base are experiencing severe levels of birth defects and cancers in children," said Susskind.

MADRE bears witness to the core values of the UCC: changing lives, continuing testament and extravagant welcome. For more info on MADRE visit [www.madre.org/index.php](http://www.madre.org/index.php).

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