

LIVING HOPE CHURCH

ANNUAL REPORT

2024-2025 Fiscal Year

EMBODY CHRIST'S LOVE

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We acknowledge that the land where we live, gather, and worship is the ancestral and unceded territory of the Ieeksun, Pentlatch, Sasitla and K'ómoks Peoples, who we know today as the K'ómoks First Nation.



Unceded means that this land was unjustly taken from the K'ómoks for the settlement and profit of others, and we acknowledge that we have benefited from this injustice. As followers of Jesus, we confess our shared part in the pain and brokenness that the church at large has perpetuated towards Indigenous Peoples in North America and around the world. We acknowledge the ongoing generational trauma of Residential schools and recognize that we have all inherited the legacy of their impact. We respect and learn from the good work Indigenous people are doing in reclaiming their cultures.

We also remember the work of Jesus Christ on the cross, and the call to His followers to be reconcilers. As Living Hope Church, we affirm our commitment to pursue reconciliation with one another, with Indigenous Peoples, and to call our community to be people of peace.



Embody Christ's Love

so that all may be renewed by the
message and mercy of Jesus.

Virtue Pairs

HOSPITALITY & GENEROSITY

We want to be welcoming to all as Christ is, to share and give beyond measure, to extend grace to others, and to encourage each other to practice this in our daily lives.

PARTICIPATION AND COVENANT

We want to value each other and equip one another to use their gifts and talents in service to Jesus. We lift each other up and we encourage everyone to live out their faith actively in their home and their community.

OBEDIENCE AND SABBATH

We want to know the Bible, God's Word, and obey all that Christ has commanded us. Part of this obedience is to rest. We rest in God's beauty and care, and in the peace of the Holy Spirit. We want this to be visible in how we live as a community and as individuals.

MISSION AND MESSAGE

We want to join God in bringing goodness, truth, and beauty everywhere, especially among the hurting, the lost, the lonely, and the poor. We want to act and speak as witnesses of Jesus in every aspect of our lives so that those we meet may know the live of Christ.

MINISTRY REPORTS

2024-2025 FISCAL YEAR

THANK YOU

*This report provides an update on some of the activities that we have conducted from **August 1, 2024, to July 31, 2025.***

Not all ministries of the church are included in this report. However, be assured that the leadership of Living Hope Church appreciates all the time and energy you spend sharing your gifts with our church and our community. May God bless you richly for your service.

PASTOR'S REPORT

Dear Living Hope Church. I pray for God's peace to be with you all. Throughout the past year, it has been a joy to me to see our community grow and flourish. I'm deeply encouraged by folks who are fairly new to the congregation stepping in, stepping up, and contributing to our life together. You all bring such wonderful gifts from God for one another, and I enjoy participating as we share those gifts with one another.

One of my favourite days was the Celebration town hall on April 6th. The inaugural Hopies Awards ceremony. What a treat to hear the stories and share the kudos and honour how we serve one another. I know people are already wondering – what kinds of awards will there be next year??! What great stories will become awards all on their own? I look forward to celebrating with you, how God is at work through you as we share of our lives with each other.

Our townhalls over the year follow a pattern: September or early October sees us with a townhall all about the launch of our ministries. Late November is our AGM. Late January or early February sees us checking in with our ministries for the second half of the fiscal year. March or April will see a townhall that is focused on celebration as we listen to stories from each other about how God is working in our shared life together and we celebrate our volunteers. And then in June, we meet to share all kinds of ideas with each other at the DreamStorm.

Last year was marked with a push to emphasize hospitality and participation, two of our 8 virtues. Coming out of that we saw a fabulous organization around events, and in particular, food events that help to give us opportunities to share in play and rest with each other. Thanks so much to Cassandra who took on the role of coordinating and facilitating our social calendar together!

Along the way, the work on the building keeps going. Lots done inside and out, thanks to Dave Dawes and all those who have helped to make things happen. I know

the community of the valley has taken notice of our investment in the property, and our user groups really appreciate the care towards how we steward the building. Of note, people are aware we are doing this work primarily with volunteers and that is seen as meaningful engagement from the members of the community taking ownership of this mission of stewarding the building well for the flourishing of life in the valley.

This year, we bid farewell to Alison Bolton. Alison was a spark of delight, and she danced for Jesus and for the joy he gave her. In my last conversations with her, she really wanted to emphasize how much she loved to praise God and felt loved and saved by Him so strongly, that praise was irresistible. Alison was encouraged and deeply knew that God held her, regardless of what would come next. For He is with her. [Isaiah 43:1-3].

Going forward, our emphasis will shift towards two other virtues. We will be focusing more on learning and growth in discipleship, and the virtues of covenant and message. This means we want to pull together a discipleship program, and work on how we communicate the message of the gospel to others.

Please join us this year as we lean into what the Spirit is calling us to, as we are being shaped and formed further up and further in to a congregation where we build one another up towards the unity of faith, and knowledge of the Son of God unto maturity; to the very full measure of the stature of Christ.

May we be led by the Spirit to Embody Christ's Love in all the ways we live. And that in this, we would know and see the renewing of all by the message and mercy of Christ.

Yours in Christ, Rev. Micah Smith



ELDERS' REPORT

Hello dear church family,

It has been another rich year for our church in many ways. This year we revised our mission and vision statements to be:

“To embody Christ’s love, that all may be renewed by the mission and mercy of Jesus.”

It is encouraging to witness our church family live out this vision and mission, as the gifts of our congregation reveal themselves through the many opportunities we have for being together and serving each other and our neighbours. Our Town Hall meetings are important spaces in which to pursue these statements together. As elders we so appreciate the level of engagement you bring to these meetings. Your voices are heard and we prayerfully consider the contributions that you make in those discussions.

There has been much activity in our grounds and facilities to make the space better for renters and our ministry needs and to bring beauty to the outdoor space. We desire to care for this building the Lord has

given us. From painting, to cleaning, setting up new sound and lighting operations, to digging and weeding and pruning, our church family pitched in to help make Living Hope Church a welcoming and pleasing space to be in. Thank you! We have also seen several new people join our congregation this year, and we hope you have found ways to make connection and welcome these newcomers to our church.

As we move into the coming year, I can assure you the elders are seeking the Lord’s guidance on various ideas. Thank you for your participation in the recent prayer meetings about next steps in our services and staffing considerations. We want to move forward together, with you, and seek to say, “It seemed good to us, and to the Holy Spirit” as we deliberate on where the Lord appears to be guiding us.

May you be aware of the Lord’s presence with you, all your days.

Grace and peace to you, brothers and sisters,
Jacquie Anderson



*Jacquie Anderson
Chair*



Krista Barlow



Mike Coady



*Jiri Karas
Secretary
Acting Treasurer*



Don Leman



Holley Card

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY



This past year in Kids Ministry has been a vibrant season of growth, creativity, and deeper connection. Our aim was to help children not only understand God's love but experience it through meaningful relationships with one another and the wider Body of Christ.

We shaped our year around the eight virtues of Living Hope Church. Believing that virtues are caught not simply taught, we brought these virtues to life through story, conversation, and playful exploration.

A particular joy this year was watching our students extend these virtues beyond the classroom. To practice Hospitality, Nancy Dawes helped us make welcome cards and cookies to share with the congregation. We celebrated God's Generosity by tasting a bounty of apples with Katie Unger and making applesauce together. We studied Covenant with Kelly Parry who taught us how to weave a community mat and Steve Mackey helped us explore constellations as symbols of God's enduring promises. Finally, we engaged with Mission by meeting real-life missionaries Brad and Cassandra Stewart and Paul and Lynn Hamilton. Through these activities and more, each week brought hands-on, engaging opportunities to connect big spiritual truths with real-life experiences.



A key element of our curriculum is intentional intergenerational connection. On Full Body Sundays, students were invited to serve in various ministries throughout the church. Paired with ministry leaders, they participated as greeters, hosts, tech helpers, nursery assistants, and more. It was inspiring to see students discover roles that matched their unique gifts and personalities.

One of the greatest blessings of our program is the involvement of the wider church community. Your participation enriched our ministry in countless ways. Your presence made our time together more meaningful, relevant, and joy-filled.

Thank you to our dedicated teaching team: Dianna Smith, Kelly Parry, Krista Barlow, Steve Mackey and Lucas Storti, to our visioning team: Jacquie Anderson and Katie Arsenault, and our guest teachers, weekly bakers and helpers who stepped in and served throughout year. We are so grateful for your investment in the lives of our kids, and we look forward to what God will continue to do in and through this ministry.

If you would like to be involved with our Children's Ministry, contact Sarah Coull (elementary ages) at kidsministry@livinghopeonline.ca or Sandra Mackey (nursery) smackey@gmail.com.

In His service,

Sarah Coull

SENIOR YOUTH

A huge amount of gratitude fills my heart when remembering all that has taken place in our Youth Ministry over the last year! God has been so faithful and good. As someone who works better alongside others, I am so grateful to have such a supportive and patient ministry partner in Naomi Ciantar. She has helped with background planning, taken care of the snacks and feeding portion for both our Sunday and Thursday youth meetings, and has hosted us so warmly in her home for our bi-weekly Thursday night gatherings. I am grateful for the various youth we have seen come out to our different events! They really are a fun and insightful group and getting to know them more has brought so much joy to Naomi and myself. I'm also grateful for YOUR support, Living Hope Church! Whenever we have held fundraisers or put a call out asking you to open up your homes for an event, you always step up and generously offer your time, space, and resources to show our youth that you care about them and that they are a part of this community.

In the last year there's been a lot going on! During our Thursday night gatherings we had basketball games, trips to the movies, games nights, a ping pong and pizza night at the Mackey's, a Food Bank scavenger hunt, a youth family BBQ, a Wii night, WIP climb nights, and a progressive dinner. During our Sunday morning youth gatherings we went through the 'Sermon on the Mount'

study from The Bible Project and talked about how seeking God and His Kingdom truly changes how we live our lives and relate to one another. Last but not least, in May 2025 we took our very memorable trip to Victoria to work with YWAM. The trip to Victoria was perhaps the most uncertain step taken in the last year, both for Naomi, myself and the youth as it was something we had never done as a group before. God was faithful, as he always is, as He invited us all to step out of our comfort zones. I'm still amazed at how He answered all our prayers for that trip and challenged those who were a part of it in such meaningful ways. Thank you again for your prayers and financial support. Because God showed such immense generosity through you, the youth didn't have to pay anything for their trip costs!

I am finally so grateful to our beautiful God who has walked with us through all the fun and even the challenges this year. When He calls you to something, He really is faithful to supply all you need to follow that call.

Respectfully submitted,

Julia Tabernero



MISSIONS

The Missions Team coordinates the outreach ministries of the church, both globally and locally. When we consider our financial giving to global ministries, we prioritize those who have gone out from our church, or from the Comox Valley, as well as those who serve with our denomination through the Global Advance Fund.

New this year to our Tithe Account missionaries were Brad and Cassandra Stewart who have worked with P2C (Power to Change) for over 20 years. Their ministry prepares and supports the next generation of missionaries in Quebec and across Canada. Brad works with students and trains staff as a research and development specialist. Cassandra serves as the support coordinator of the Quebec staff. As they mostly work remotely, you will recognize Brad and Cassandra as active members of our Living Hope Church community.

On the local front, the Living Hope For Ukraine group continued to support displaced Ukrainians in our community. In collaboration with Christ the King Church, Don Leman coordinated weekly grocery deliver to Ukrainian households until the program ended in January. As well, we were able to provide grocery gift cards to needy Ukrainians from the generous donations to our Ukraine fund.

Matthew 25:34-40 (NRSV)

³⁴ Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world,' ³⁵ for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.' ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food or thirsty and gave you something to drink? ³⁸ And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you or naked and gave you clothing? ³⁹ And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?' ⁴⁰ And the king will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me.'

During early 2025, the Barlows hosted a small Alpha group in their home. Alpha is a 14-session course which explores the basics of Christian faith in a context where participants are encouraged to ask their big questions, share their thoughts and hear others' perspectives. It's an excellent opportunity for those outside the church – and those in the church – to connect with others and learn more about the Christian faith. **We are praying about running another Alpha starting in January 2026. If you are interested in attending or preparing meals for Alpha evenings, please contact Krista.**

Our calling to be missional people continues. We are praying about ways God might be calling us to use our facilities for outreach to our community. **If you are interested in knowing more about the Missions Team, or joining us, please contact me.**



Respectfully submitted by Krista Barlow.

Note: For a full report of the Widows' Garden Project, please see Appendix A.

LITTLE RED CHURCH

I stepped into the role of rentals coordinator in May 2025. As you know, Vicky was the first coordinator, and she did a wonderful job learning the system (with no handover from the previous owner) and making it work for our needs. Micah dealt with the rentals once Vicky stepped back from her role, and being a techy, he made many technical changes to electronically improve the rental management process.

I enjoy working with our community and assisting them with having a space to carry out special events such as, weddings (Micah officiates sometimes), receptions, birthdays, celebrations of life, anniversaries, work parties, presentations, yoga and many other types of classes, cheer groups, choral groups, improv, and pro wrestling. I enjoy speaking with people, meeting them in person, and finding a way to meet their rental needs. It is important relationship building in our community that is incredibly rewarding.

I have gradually learned to take over the process which consists of:

- Checking emails and responding to requests. As an example, I sent out 154 emails between October 1-15. This is slightly higher than normal volume.
- Accept phone calls from the Little Red Church number. It's usually 2-4 times per day with an occasional no-call day. This includes weekends.
- Updating reservation information for renter requests. They often ask to change the time or date or add a service like Janitorial.
- Sometimes, I need to create a reservation manually.
- Preparing draft invoices and requesting payment of deposit or full amount depending on the timeframe.
- Sending out final payment invoices. This includes regularly checking to see that they have been paid and following up if they have not.

- Requesting door codes and sending them to the renter on a timely basis.
- Scheduling janitorial, set up, take down, and sound services. Charis took on the job of janitorial from the beginning of our use of the Little Red Church. She has now stepped back due to school and work. Thank you, Charis, for all your hard work!
- Dave or I meet with potential renters to show the hall or chapel spaces.
- And more....

We have 8 regular weekly rentals, at least 7 groups that rent monthly or frequently, and many single event renters.

The summer months usually slow down with fewer regular renters. This summer we saw an increase in weddings, receptions and other celebrations. Fall has been extraordinarily busy resulting in a very full calendar of events to the point that we are working hard to find space for everyone. Micah says that we have increased rental income significantly this year.

What has increased our volume of rentals you ask? Yes, we have increased social media awareness, and word of mouth travels well, but the single most frequent comment has been the beautification of the grounds. I have been told many times that the work we did was what attracted a renter to our space. A huge thank you to everyone involved in that work!

In His service,
Nancy Dawes



See what's on the LRC Facebook page and please be sure to follow, like and share the posts!

[Little Red Church Facebook](#)

2024 AGM MINUTES

Date: November 24, 2024

Chairperson: Jacquie Anderson

Secretary: Jiri Karas

1. 12:40 pm - Meeting called to order – Jacquie Anderson (JA)
2. Opening prayer - JA
3. Review of meeting procedures - JA
4. Approval of the agenda
Motion: Heather Nye. 2nd: Don Leman.
No discussion. Passed.
5. Election of tellers
Nominated: Nancy Dawes, Steve Perry
Motion to nominate: Mike Coady. 2nd: Hollee Card.
No discussion. Passed.
6. Adoption of AGM 2023 minutes
Motion: Marg Leman. 2nd: David Dawes.
No discussion. Adopted.
7. Testimony (Elijah)
8. Receiving ministry reports as presented to the congregation in writing.
Pastor's address + prayer for ministries and church life
Motion to receive the reports: Micah Smith. 2nd Barry Mackey. No discussion. Passed
9. Elections of elders
Holle Card (1st term) and Mike Coady (3rd term) stand for role of elders.
Vote by members by secret ballot.
10. Testimony: (Brad Stewart)
11. Nominating committee nominations
Nominated: Lucas Storti and Annie Troy
Motion to nominate Annie: Wendy Henderson. 2nd Vicky Trill. No discussion. Passed
Motion to nominate Lucas: Heather Nye. 2nd: Steve Mackey. No discussion. Passed
12. Results of elections after count by tellers
Both nominees voted in
Steve Mackey ending in elder role
13. Destroy the ballots after wait period
Motion: Pearl Graham. 2nd: Lyse Clement.
No Discussion. Passed
14. Receiving the Financial report (2023-2024)
Motion to receive the report: Dave Dawes, 2nd: Chris Van Tol
Treasurer's comments on the report (Steve Mackey)
Discussion. Vote to receive. Passed.

Treasurer's update on LRC purchase
15. Receiving 2024/25 budget
Budget presented by Steve Mackey.
Motion to receive the budget as approved by elders: Wendy Henderson, 2nd: Pearl Graham
Discussion. Vote to receive. Passed
16. Prayer for the elders and pastor
17. Meeting adjourned – 2:00 pm

BUDGET

2025-2026

Line #	REVENUE	2023/24 Budget	2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Budget	2024/25 Actual	2024/25 difference	2025/26 Budget
1	GENERAL FUND (Undesignated)						
2	General Fund	250,000	255,693	255,000	285,960	30,960	280,000
3	10% Tithe of General to Restricted	-25,000	-25,607	-25,500	-28596	-3096	-28,000
4	Funds from Tithe Account	22,000	18,290	22,000	22,000	0	26,000
7	Interest Income	2,000	2,866		137.63	138	
10	Ministry Fund interest	5,500		5,500	1331	-4,169	1,200
11	Office Rental	2,800		4,500	55,884.00	11,385	50,000
12	Hall Rentals	36,000	38,608	36,000			
13	Chapel Rental	3,150		4,000			
14	TOTAL GENERAL FUND	296,450	316,639	301,500	336,717	35,217	329,200

15	DESIGNATED FUNDS						
16	Building Fund	12,000	9,500	12,000	22310	10,310	20,000
17	Ministry Residence Loan repayment			4,800	4400	-400	4,800
18	Benevolence	5,000	4,040	5,000	5386	387	5,000
19	Missions Coffee Fundraiser		1,371		1462	1462	
21	OTHER MINISTRIES						
24	MISSIONS						
25	Global Advance	7,000	5,040	5,000	2520	-2,480	2,500
26	Support for Displaced Ukrainians		3,738		2100		
28	TOTAL DESIGNATED FUNDS	24,000	23,689	26,800	38,178	11,378	32,300
29							
30	TOTAL REVENUE	320,450	340,328	328,300	374,895	46,595	361,500

Line #	EXPENSES	2023/24 Budget	2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Budget	2024/25 Actual	24/25 difference	2025/26 Budget
31	GENERAL FUND EXPENSES						
32	Mortgage	86,000	86,113	83,000	88,890	5,890	88,000
33	Property Tax	0	5,652	1,400	2,240	840	1,800
34	Maintenance	4,000	4,096	4,000	4,310	310	4,000
35	Reserve Fund (savings for bigger repairs)	3,500					*
36	Casual pay	6,500	16,215	16,000	11,700	-4,300	n/a
37	Advertising/Website	1,000	419	500	135	-365	500
38	Bank Charges	2,000	1,977	2,000	2,633	633	2,000
39	Bookkeeping	7,800	7,800	7,800	8,184	384	7,500
40	Cell Phone	1,150	929	1,000	560	-440	1,000
41	Insurance	6,100	7,390	7,400	7,648	248	6,500
42	Office Expenses	5,000	3,528	4,000	4,231	231	4,100
43	Office Software Expenses	3,500	2,350	2,500	3,245	745	3,300
44	Professional Fees	2,500	5,112	8,000	9,225	1,225	10,000
45	Shaw Internet/Phone	1,700	1,500	1,700	1,066	-634	1,500
46	Salaries & Wages	105,000	96,569	100,000	98,000	-2,000	120,000
47	EI Expense	2,000	2,213	2,500	2,461	-39	2,600
48	CPP Expense	4,300	3,714	4,000	4,910	910	5,600
49	Employee Benefits – Medical	5,250	6,231	5,250	8,000	2,750	5,250
50	Employee Benefits – Retirement	3,600	3,927	4,000	3,649	-351	4,000
51	WCB Expense	200	150.79	175	337	162	500
52	Utilities	7,600	5,527	5,250	7,174	1,924	8,000
53	Books & Resource Material	600	382	600	547	-53	600
54	Children's Ministry	1,000	93	1,000	230	-770	1,000
55	Church Sunday expenses			1,000	1,150	150	1,500
56	Church Functions (hospitality rolled into this)	2,000	1,343	2,000	1,844	-156	2,000
57	Conferences	0	1,064	1,000	270	-730	2,000

Line #	EXPENSES	2023/24 Budget	2023/24 Actual	2024/25 Budget	2024/25 Actual	24/25 difference	2025/26 Budget
58	GENERAL FUND EXPENSES						
59	District Operating Budget	6,150	6,302	6,400	6,480	80	6,500
60	Gifts	500	325	500	742	242	600
61	Global Outreach	1,000		1,000		-1,000	1,000
62	Homewood			1,000	500	-500	2,500
63	Honorariums	600	450	600	225	-375	600
64	Hope Groups	300		300	0	-300	300
65	Local Outreach	1,000		1,000	841	-159	1,000
66	Music & Sound Equipment	250	205	250	870	620	1,000
67	Pastoral Expenses	1,000	859	1,000	1,272	272	1,200
68	Pastoral Travel/Guest Speaker	1,500	1,200	1,500	1,070	-430	1,500
69	Rental Expenses – Janitorial, advertising		600	600	967	367	1,000
70	Selah		647	500	585	85	500
71	Youth Ministry	1,500	1,768	3,750	3,849	99	4,000
72	TOTAL GENERAL FUND EXPENSES	276,100	276,652	284,475	290,040	5,565	304,950
73	DESIGNATED FUND EXPENSES						
74	Building Fund	12,000		12,000	16,406	4,406	20,000
75	Benevolence	5,000	3,050	5,000	1,750	-3,250	5,000
76	Global Advance	7,000	4,600	5,000	2,520	-2,480	2,500
77	Missions Coffee Fundraiser				1,161	1,161	
78	United Way (Hall upgrades)	59,200	72,360		4,180	4,180	
79	Missions Trip		56,139		4,611	4,611	
80	Support for Displaced Ukrainians		6,400				
81	TOTAL DESIGNATED FUND EXPENSES	83,200	136,149	22,000	30,628	8,628	7,500
82	CHURCH TITHE ACCOUNT EXPENSES						
83	Ambrose University College	1,750	1,565	1,750	1,750		1,950
84	Global Advance	4,000	3,590	4,000	4,000		4,400
85	The Nesting Place	2,500	2,465	2,500	2,500		2,800
86	Wycliffe Bible Translators – Windsors	3,250	2,915	3,250	3,250		3,600
87	Youth For Christ Comox Valley	4,000	3,590	4,000	4,000		4,400
88	Youth For Christ Global (Hamps)	3,000	2,640	3,000	3,000		3,700
89	Youth With A Mission/Lori Hilligardt	1,750	1,750	1,750	1,750		2,500
90	P2C Stewarts			1,750	1,750		2,650
91	TOTAL CHURCH TITHE ACCT EXPENSES	22,000	22,000	22,000	22,000		26,000
92							
93	TOTAL EXPENSE	381,300	434,801	328,475	342,668	14,193	358,450
94	NET INCOME	-60,850	-94,472	-175	32,227	32,402	3,050

APPENDIX A

WIDOWS' GARDEN PROJECT

Living Hope's Widows' Gardens Project Final Report -- October 14, 2025



The last team, all Comox Valley types -- Jane and Desmond Conway, Rob and Lissa Benson, Micah and Charis, Chris van Tol, Dave Dawes, and (moi) -- visited the Widows' Gardens Project in October 2024 and spent 9 days with the widows. The energetic eight interviewed 153 new-to-the-Project widows in order to assign each their 3 plots (3/4 acre) and seeds. They also met with the groups who received their plots in the early years (2017, 2018, 2019) to ask how they were doing, and with the six newest groups to give them each a sizeable chunk of cash (3 million Ugandan shillings) for their fledgling micro credit funds. Now they'll be able to supplement their income with small loans for local business ventures. A similar cash donation was given to the Rubingo widows who reported to us that they would be relying more heavily on microcredit due to the scarcity of rental plots in their area.

One afternoon the ladies on the team demonstrated and distributed 148 reusable menstrual kits provided by a hardworking Comox Valley group to girls at Kisyoro Secondary School. I wish you could have heard the shout which went up from the 148 excited students when the long blue sticks of laundry soap were produced. It was as if they'd won the lottery.

On another occasion the team interviewed sponsored students who attended Kigarama Primary School, just a short walk from the home of Elly and Jovanice Nankunda, where we were billeted. The school's infrastructure has been the beneficiary of successive teams of Canadian visitors to the Project, and this time enough donated used laptops were carried to Uganda to serve an entire class of 30 students.

As you know, 2024 was the final year of the 9-year Widows' Gardens Project. The 2024 team was impressed with the sustainability of the Project. The longer-established groups reported that by now many widows had been able to send their kids to school while maintaining the three rented garden plots, their families enjoying better health and enhanced social status -- no longer beggars in their communities. Some had even been able to purchase plots of their own. They certainly LOOKED and sounded happier as a group.

Why stop? Well, I'm 78 and slowing down. And I want to give donors who have stuck with the Project for years and years a stopping off point. In Mbarara there's a down-at-heel little hotel named, the "Full Stop Hotel". This is now the Project's full stop, having provided food security to 1087 widows and their



dependents (!) Not bad, given our goal at the outset: 360 widows after 6 years. ((Thanks be to God)). And thanks be to you Living Hope people.

At this point an independent community-based organization (CBO) has been established by and for the widows of the Project area. Leaders from among the widows' groups, guided by Elly Nankunda as CBO Chairperson, will be in a position to manage their own projects in future as alternate funding sources are found.



As the WGP ended on December 31st 2024 and Living Hope Church now turns its attention to other ministries, Bay Community Church, also based in Comox, continues to support activities benefitting the widows and orphans of the same Project area in southwestern Uganda. The Uganda Possibilities Project (UPP) initiated and nurtured by Pearl and Marvin Morin (WPG 2018 team), is a channel for Canadian charitable giving to provide mobile medical clinics, student sponsorships, emergency housing relief, and infrastructure improvements to Kigarama Primary School which has opened its doors to a number of orphans who cannot afford to pay school fees.



My heartfelt thanks to each of you Living Hope folks and I am especially grateful to Tim Folkman who faithfully served as liaison on behalf of the Church throughout the life of the Project.

With love, respect, and gratitude,
David Moore, Volunteer Project Officer, Widows' Gardens Project (Uganda)

Note by interviewer/evaluator:

After becoming part of the groups and eventually receiving assistance, many participants saw it as a sign that their prayers had been listened to and pledged a bigger commitment to faith and thankfulness.

Faith is also an important part of the functioning of the groups. All monthly meetings start and end with a prayer, being religious and god-fearing often comes up in the advice the women give one another, and their faith mediates the attitude towards the assistance they receive. Even though some of them are of different religions or confessions (the most popular are Roman Catholicism, Anglicanism, Pentecostalism and Islam), they all underline the importance of worshipping together and having religion as a foundation of their groups

P.S. Here are a few recent testimonials collected from the widows by a team of students from the University of Utrecht (Holland), who conducted an in-depth evaluation of the Project during the summer of 2024:

"I was struggling to get food, school fees and on top of that I had to fight with the in-laws. I got a problem of high blood pressure and diabetes. Eventually the land was taken by the in-laws."
[Kabumba whole group]

"Before the death of my husband I was not very rich but I had some money. But after I sold most things for medication, there was no difference between me and others who were poorer"
[Kabumba whole group]

"Sometimes I felt like even God was not listening to the poor and I could spend days without praying" [Kitezo, 1 individual]



"I used to fear coming to the door of the church, but the religion was there. I had my old church, but I was afraid to go there in a torn dress in which I worked for the whole day." [Kagunga, 1 individual]

"When I had my husband he would assist me, I had my responsibilities, he had his, he was the provider for the family. But already when he fell sick, I took over. I would go around, ask people for help for the medication and become the main provider of the family. When he died, others demanded the return of the money."
[Kabumba whole group]

"Before getting the assistance there was not a big difference between me and an animal, when I walked in the village people would cross to the other side in order for them not to cross paths with me" [Kagunga whole group]



By the time I lost my husband, I couldn't just come by and ask any men for help, because the wives would think I wanted to steal their husbands. I simply couldn't, even if it was about something like fixing the roof."

[Kagunga, 3 individuals]

"When I was coming from somewhere, people would identify me based on the one dress I would always wear. The people of the community would say; 'she is alone and anytime her children will steal our stuff.'"

[Kabuyanda, 2 individuals]

"At times we would fail to get money to buy paraffin, we would stay without light at our places and when we sometimes also failed to get what to eat, we would become hopeless"

[Kagunga whole group]

"If something was stolen, people would start complaining that the children from the widow's families were the ones responsible for stealing, and sometimes it was even the case."

[Kabumba, 2 individuals]



"After receiving assistance, we managed to get what to eat and put our children in schools and pay for their school fees. Now, we could get what to put on [clothes], have more than one dress, buy soap to wash our clothes, and attend social gatherings, without feeling ashamed anymore" [Kabumba whole group]

"I had only one dress, if it was time to go to church, I would wash it in the morning and put it to dry. If it wouldn't dry in time, I wouldn't go to church. Now, as you can see, I have a beautiful dress, I am able to go to church, meet other people, praise the Lord."

[Kagunga, whole group]

"After getting assistance, I harvested much, got food for myself and my children, school fees and managed to build the house that I currently reside at"

[Kabumba whole group]

APPENDIX B

2024-25 FINANCIAL REPORT

(WILL BE DISTRIBUTED WHEN AVAILABLE)