

The Marketplace

March
April
2019

Where Christian faith
gets down to business

Stronger Economies through Equity

Doing business ethically

Jobs training in Winnipeg

Engaging event planning

Growing groundnuts
in Nigeria





Working for a balanced world through gender equity

March 8 is International Women’s Day. This year’s theme is #Balance for Better.

Balance is not a women’s issue, but rather a business issue, the campaign suggests. “Gender balance is essential for economies and communities to thrive.”

Creating business solutions to poverty by providing economic empowerment to vulnerable populations, including women and youth, is a major focus of MEDA’s work.

The World Economic Forum’s 2018 Global Gender Gap report suggests that 89 of the 144 countries covered saw improvements towards gender equality in the past two years. But there is still a long way to go towards equality, as a 32 per cent average gender gap remains to be closed.

“Gaps in control of financial assets and in time spent on unpaid tasks continue to preserve economic disparities between men and women,” the report says. “Women have as much access to financial services as men in just 60 per cent of the countries and to land ownership in just 42 per cent of the countries addressed.”

There are still 44 countries where over 20 per cent of women are illiterate.

At the current rate of progress, it will take 108 years to close the global gender gap in 106 countries.

Iceland is the most gender-equal country in the world, followed by Norway and Sweden. Yemen, Pakistan and Iraq are the three nations with the worst gender gaps.

MEDA staff are occasionally asked why we put so much emphasis on empowering women. There is a strong economic case to be made, on several levels.

A study by McKinsey, a worldwide management consulting firm, suggests that \$28 trillion could be added to annual global GDP (gross domestic product) if women participated in the economy at the same level as men.

To put that in context, \$28 trillion is the combined current output of the US and China, the world’s two largest economies.

Last fall, *Economic Gains from Gender Inclusion: New Mechanisms, New Evidence*, a staff paper written for the International Monetary Fund (IMF) found that decreasing barriers that prevent women from entering the workforce and narrowing participation gaps between women and men will likely produce even larger economic gains than

was previously understood.

Several stories in this issue (*see pp. 10-15*) explore MEDA’s efforts to promote gender equity. For a visual primer on the difference between equality and equity, see the graphic on the back cover of this issue.

Protecting the right to pay cash

A recent issue of *Fortune* magazine had an extensive series of stories on the withering away of America’s middle class, including causes, tales of people affected and suggested solutions.

A short blurb that catches the eye dealt with a subject most of us don’t consider: the plight of people who don’t have bank accounts, 8.4 million households in the US. *Your Money is No Good Here* discusses the increasing number of businesses that won’t accept cash.

Currently, Massachusetts is the only US state to pass a right to use cash law. New Jersey and other states are apparently considering following suit.

Discussing the missing majority

Conversations about faith and work exclude two-thirds of the American workforce, Jeff Haanen notes in a provocative, widely-read article.

Haanen, CEO and founder of the Denver Institute for Faith & Work, explores this challenging reality in his article *God of the Second Shift: The missing majority in the faith and work conversation*. His piece, published last fall, was the second-most read story online at *Christianity Today’s* website last year.



“I’ll bet that in a few years, gender won’t be a wedge issue like it is today!”

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Sam's Place manager Alison Greenslade shares a laugh with volunteer Arshdeep Kaur

Departments

- 2 Roadside stand
- 4 Soul enterprise
- 20 Review

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Features

6 A supportive shop

Winnipeg coffee shop Sam's Place helps youth gain job skills. *By John Longhurst*

11 Why women?

Promoting gender equity makes business sense but isn't always easy.

16 Planting peanuts

MEDA Nigeria staff experience challenges their clients face. *By Dennis Tessier and Salihu Samuel Wamde*



Deputy field project manager Fosen Grace Okelola

18 A love for event planning

B.C. woman has a passion for making conferences run smoothly. *By Mike Strathdee*



Steve and Anne Michelle Ewert observe MEDA's annual convention from behind the sound board.

Stewarding everyone's gifts

Christians should care about equity in the workplace

By Joanna Meyer

Men and women work side by side, wrestling with the same business challenges, attending the same meetings, and walking the same hallways. But as a recent *Wall Street Journal* article suggests, the common ground ends there:

“Men and women experience very different workplaces, ones in which the odds for advancement vary widely and corporate careers come in two flavors: his and hers...Data show

that men win more promotions, more challenging assignments and more access to top leaders than women do. Men are more likely than women to feel confident they are en route to an executive role and feel more strongly that their employer rewards merit. Women, meanwhile, perceive a steeper trek to the top. Less than half feel that promotions are awarded fairly or that the best opportunities go to the most-deserving employees. A significant share of women say that

gender has been a factor in missed raises and promotions. Even more believe that their gender will make it harder for them to advance in the future — a sentiment most strongly felt by women at senior levels.”

As Christians, why should we care about equity in the workplace? What does Scripture say about leadership in the workplace? How do we navigate the practical challenges of men and women working together in God-honoring ways?



Why does it matter?

From what I've observed, most Christian men genuinely desire to do the right thing. They expect women to be treated respectfully in professional settings and seek to honor their marriages as they interact with female colleagues, but they may not recognize subtle biases or cultural dynamics that hold women back at work. For others, the perceived cost of supporting women's advancement may outweigh the benefit of shifting the status quo.

Speaking plainly, companies won't see a more balanced workforce until the men that lead them see women's contributions as essential to success. Like any diversity initiative, this isn't about finding a token woman to serve on your board; rather, it's about building a workplace culture that stewards the gifts of every employee.



Joanna Meyer

Restoring the Blessed Alliance

You don't have to look farther than the Old Testament book of Genesis to discover male/female collaboration at the root of God's earthly design. Author Carolyn Custis James, in her book *Half The Church — Recapturing God's Global Vision for Women*, refers to this God-ordained partnership as the "Blessed Alliance":

"The notion that things work better, and human beings become their best selves when men and women work together is found on page one of the Bible."

"What has the ring of something innovative and progressive is actually a remnant of humanity's forgotten ancient past — an idea with primordial biblical roots that can be traced back to the Garden of Eden.

The notion that things work better, and human beings become their best selves when men and women work together is found on page one of the Bible. When God was launching the most ambitious enterprise the world has ever known, the team He put together to do the job was male and female.

Adam and Eve faced a challenge of Mount Everest proportions that required a solid connection between themselves and their Creator. As His vice-regents, together they were charged with looking after things on His behalf — wisely to steward and utilize the earth's resources. Their goal together was to build His gracious kingdom on earth. No square inch of earth is excluded. No arena of life is beyond the parameters of their joint rule...

[God created a] Blessed Alliance between male and female. Having created his male and female image bearers, 'God blessed them,' then spread before them the global mandate to rule and subdue on His behalf.



According to Genesis, male/female relationships are a kingdom strategy — designed to be an unstoppable force for good in the world." (emphasis added)

It's common to assume this "blessed alliance" refers to the marriage relationship, but to do so ignores dynamic male/female partnerships throughout the Bible. Consider the examples of Esther and Mordecai, who saved the Israelites from a genocidal king, Aquila and Priscilla, who labored as tentmakers alongside Paul, or Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna, who funded Christ's ministry. The alliance also flows through church history in the work of Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross, friends whose passion for Christ inspired Catholic renewal in 16th century Spain, or William Wilberforce and Hannah More, whose leadership of the Clapham Circle abolished slavery in England.

By losing our vision for the Blessed Alliance, we've allowed the enemy to diminish our collective impact. We compete rather than collaborate, and as the #MeToo movement has shown, abused those God intends as allies. ♦

Joanna Meyer serves as Denver Institute for Faith & Work's Director of Events & Sponsorships and oversees the Women & Vocation Initiative. This article was part of Called Together: A Biblical Perspective on Gender Roles in the Workplace, a four-part series on gender roles. You can read the other posts in the series at this link: <https://denverinstitute.org/biblical-perspective-gender-roles-1/>

"When God speaks about equity, that choice of word, makes us understand that God is not referring to the leaders of the land or the elite this time around. He is actually talking about how ordinary citizens of the land relate to each other in fairness and impartiality"
— *Sunday Adelaja*

Building futures at Sam's Place

Coffee shop provides youth with skills to become employable

By John Longhurst

Winnipeg, Man — It's the morning lull at Sam's Place, the time between the opening rush for coffee and the lunch crowd.

There are about a half-dozen people in the coffee shop, café and used bookstore — two women having a meeting, a student doing some studying, one or two people browsing the books, a mother and child playing in the games area at the back.

At the counter is Rachel Braun, making a coffee for a customer. The 14-year-old isn't an employee. She's a volunteer.

And Sam's Place isn't a usual coffee shop — it's a social enterprise designed to help youth get ready for employment.

The grade nine student is doing an internship — “learning by doing,” as she puts it.

“I love this place,” says Braun. “I'm learning lots of valuable skills and building up my resume and references.”

She's also getting experience as a barista — something the aspiring actor jokes could come in handy in the future.

Braun is just one of over 100 young people who receive workplace training every year at Sam's Place, opened by Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Manitoba in 2009.

Located in Winnipeg's Elmwood neighborhood, a lower income area between downtown and the more prosperous East and North Kildonan suburbs, the shop's goal is to provide youth from the area with opportuni-

photos by John Longhurst



Volunteer Rachel Braun learning the tricks of the barista trade from Sam's Place volunteer manager Alex Strange

ties to get ahead economically.

“Our primary mission is to help youth develop work skills, build a resume and get references,” says manager Alison Greenslade.

Greenslade, who once worked at a Starbucks, says the volunteers get a variety of experiences — in the “dish pit” (washing dishes), making food in the kitchen, and at the front of house serving customers.

Volunteers come from various life situations, she says; there are newcomers to Canada, Indigenous youth, kids from lower income families, and students from area high schools do-

ing service hours or practicums.

Most are between 14-18 years-old, although some are older.

“It's a chance for them to learn skills in a softer environment, a place a little less demanding and intense, learn at their own pace, develop their skills and confidence, give them experience they can take to future employers,” she explains.

Some of the youth find it hard, she says, while for others it's “super easy.”

“Some are incredible in the kitchen, others struggle up front. We seek to find everyone's strength,” she shares.

And yes, mistakes are made.

“We view it as part of learning,” she says. “We follow up with them, so they don’t do it again.”

It helps that many customers know the youth are in training. They “are understanding, more patient.”

Volunteers usually stay about three months. When they leave, they’ll have references and a resume — and friendships with each other and staff.

“A lot stay in contact after they are done,” she says.

For Greenslade, who has a busi-

ness degree, working at Sam’s Place is a “dream job.”

“This is everything I trained for — it’s a business, a non-profit, a ministry, a social enterprise that seeks to make a difference for youth.”

“I want to run it as a business, to benefit our mission.”

Different ways of measuring success

Ideally, Sam’s Place would be a thriving business, paying all its expenses

one cup of coffee, one bowl of soup or a piece of pastry at a time.

But that’s not the case — and Darryl Loewen, Executive Director of MCC Manitoba, is OK with that.

He’s reluctant to share how much the business earns each year, but says the goal is for it “to be as sustainable as it can.”

Financial sustainability isn’t the only bottom line, he notes.

“Sam’s Place exists to help local youth become empowered and get an

A good place to start

We handle it every day, so we never think about how challenging our colorful money looks to non-Canadians.

Arshdeep Kaur knows.

The 23-year-old immigrated to Canada from India last summer with plans to attend college in fall.

Since she had time before classes started, she decided to volunteer — it would be a way, she thought, to learn more about Canada, network and make new friends.

Serving coffee at Sam’s has helped Arshdeep Kaur learn about Canada, and instilled a desire to start her own business

Sam’s Place turned out to be a perfect fit.

“I had never had a cappuccino before,” she says. “I don’t even drink coffee.”

But now she is skilled at the counter, making drinks for customers, as well as working in the kitchen.

As a bonus, working the till means she quickly learned about Canadian currency.

“I’m learning more about life in Canada, about Canadians, improving my people skills,” she says. “Now

I understand Canadians better, I know what to say, what not to say.”

She did so well as a volunteer that Sam’s Place hired her for several shifts a week, as well as during holidays.

“The ambience is so homey,” she says, adding her goal is to open her own business in Canada.

“For me, this has been a good place to start, to get experience.”

But she doesn’t expect to ever drink coffee.

“That’s a Canadian thing.” ♦



on-ramp into the workforce.”

For Loewen, it’s also important to him — and to MCC — to see youth who might otherwise have a hard time getting jobs get valuable experience, so they can find work.

It’s a vision shared by volunteer manager and youth engagement coordinator Alex Strange.

“If we wanted to be busier, we would locate in Wolseley” — a hip peace-and-granola part of town — “but this is where people need jobs. That’s why we are here.”

As a result, Sam’s Place survives on a mix of sales, small government and foundation grants, some donations, and support from MCC.

The payoff is seeing youth, some who come from difficult circumstances, get ready for the workforce.

“This is where people need jobs. That’s why we’re here.”

“We have people whose parents are struggling financially,” he says, noting that some volunteers come from families where they’ve never seen parents hold a steady job.

“Not all of them are ready to be employed,” Strange says. “Some really struggle. We could pass on

them, but who are we if we only take the best?”

Some of the youth come from unstable homes. Strange has taken a few youth to his home for the night after an evening shift because they had nowhere else to go.

“I have a very understanding wife,” he says.

While the goal is to help youth develop hard skills — to make food, make drinks, work a till — Sam’s Place also teaches soft skills such as how to work with others, be presentable, interact with the public and dealing with conflict and stress.

It isn’t always easy, he notes. “There are times when we need to be patient and understanding.”

What about theft? “The till has been short a few times,” he says. “But we try to trust these kids. Often nobody else does.”

“Gaining Confidence”

At 28, Adam Tetreault isn’t the usual kind of volunteer. Sam’s Place is just as important to him at his stage in life.

“I’ve been struggling with depression and anxiety for years,” he says.

In the past, “anxiety prevented me from even applying for work.” Now he hopes the experience he’s getting at Sam’s Place will help him get a job.

“I like the atmosphere, I’m gaining confidence,” he says of the two days a week he works in the kitchen.

“I enjoy food prep, and I’m making new friends. It’s a very encouraging environment.”

As he goes back to the kitchen, I think of an adage attributed to Albert Einstein: “Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.”

At Sam’s Place, they’ve taken that to heart — wanting to achieve as much business success as possible but knowing there are many other goals that won’t show up on a traditional bottom line.

Or, as Greenslade puts it: “We are not a coffee shop that trains youth. We are a training facility that happens to run a coffee shop.” ♦



Adam Tetreault cuts peppers. Volunteering at Sam’s Place has helped him gain confidence and experience he hopes will lead to a job.

Measuring success through transformative leadership

Former tech executive urges students to take values-based approach to business.

Christians in business must realize that achieving success is only the first of two important journeys in life, says the former chief operating officer of the company that created the smart phone.

Life's first journey is building a career and becoming a growth junkie, committed to life-long learning, Don Morrison said in a speech to students at Redeemer University College in Ancaster, ON.

Morrison was chief operating officer for Research in Motion/Blackberry from 2000 to 2012. During his tenure, both Forbes and Fortune magazine named the Waterloo-based firm the fastest growing company in the world, for four consecutive years.

"Just realize that, as a Christian, there's a second journey," he said.

"The second journey is a paradox to the first journey. The second journey is this concept, of metanoia (spiritual conversion), where you learn to commit yourself to losing."

Morrison, who is deeply interested in spirituality, chairs the Dalai Lama Centre for Ethics and Transformative Values at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

"You have to learn how to live inside that paradox, (because Jesus) Christ

didn't drive around in a Mercedes." Realizing that stuff is not the end game is an important perspective, he said.

Morrison's career journey was both rocky and unexpected, with several "monumental failures" prior to finding success. He attended summer school, involuntarily, three times during high school to improve his grades.

Raised Catholic, his first career goal was to become a priest. That changed when he was 17 and met his future wife.

Next, he wanted to become a lawyer to make a lot of money. After attempting the law school entrance exam and ending up in the 12th percentile in one category, he reconsidered.

He got a job at a bank but realized he didn't have a disposition for finance. He applied to every teachers' college in southern Ontario and was turned down.

In the late 1970s, he became an entry level salesman at Bell. He was promoted to management a year later, then became the youngest national account manager in the organization by the end of his second year.

Not longer after that, the boss who had mentored him was transferred, replaced by someone who wasn't supportive.

"There's no such thing as a career where you get a straight shot. What's going to happen is it's going to run like an amplitudinal wave,

photo by Mike Strathdee



Don Morrison

where you're going to have moments where you are peaking, and everything's great, then you are going to have these declining moments, even some troughing moments. I will tell you that it's the troughing moments where all the learning is, coming to grips with who you are."

Morrison had a troughing moment in 1980. Recognizing the value of a business degree, he took Master of Business Administration studies. Near the end of that degree, Bell cancelled his leave of absence, leaving him without a job.

Ending up at AT&T, he rose to become president of consumer and small business for AT&T Canada but was later fired. He wasn't out of work long. The same day, he sent his acceptance papers to RIM to join that firm.

"You just never really know until life presents itself to you."

He thinks understanding the value of transformative rather than transactional leadership is a crucial business issue.

Transactional leaders embrace economist Milton Friedman's philosophy that the sole purpose of business is to pursue top-line growth and bottom line performance for the benefit of shareholders. That mindset has driven business for hundreds of years.

"The art of the deal, the idea is that I win, you lose. It's the arrogance of competitive advantage."

Morrison recalls Blackberry sponsoring We Day events — an educational event promoted by the WE charity to celebrate young people making a difference — in Kitchener-Waterloo, so employees would have something to give to their kids. Parents volunteered, many of their children and others from schools across the region attended, hearing speakers that included the Rev. Jesse Jackson and former US vice-president Al Gore.

After the event, a board member told him that Apple (Blackberry's

chief competitor at the time) doesn't sponsor those sorts of events, that the event wouldn't contribute to a single additional smart phone being sold. Morrison replied that he had different criteria.

"The world is full of transactional leaders. That's how we got here (to an unsustainable situation)," he said.

Transformative leadership, on the other hand, is selfless, values-based, taking a balanced view. "I win, and you win."

What Morrison calls his gut check is based on two commandments from the New Testament of the Bible, loving God and loving others as you love yourself.

"You are not the sum of what you own, or where you live."

Transformation requires having a discipline in your life, he said. "I always ask myself the question, who do you serve?"

He urged his audience to be internally focused rather than externally dependent.

Being created in the image and likeness of God should influence how a person approaches life, he said.

Externally dependent people define themselves by what others say about them. People rooted in faith can cultivate a self-image that supersedes anything anyone says about them, positive or negative. "The biggest test of this will be times when things don't necessarily go your way."

"You are not the sum of what you own, or where you live, nor are you really your thoughts, your fears or the stories that you tell yourself."

Morrison claims the American Trappist monk Thomas Merton, a

noted theologian, writer and social activist, had more impact on his life than anyone other than his parents.

"The extent to which you can, in your spiritual discipline, allow this (love of God) to permeate you, this becomes your defining person, that you are blessed, and you are full of grace, there are no words for this."

Poetry, art and music-making reflect the highest nature of what it means to be human, he said.

"I think if there were enough of us that were cultivating this, and we had disciplines in our lives, to cultivate this beauty in ourselves, this great capacity for unity, this consciousness of compassion and humility, I think it would have a transformative effect on the world."

Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs, first proposed in a psychology journal in 1943, is well known for laying out the basics people need for survival, security and self-actualization. What is less understood, Morrison noted, is that before he died, Maslow tacked a new item on the top of the pyramid — he called it self-transcendence — understanding that a person is not at the centre.

"See that your thoughts are not who you are, but you really are (in the words of Thomas Merton) this beautiful person, made in the image and likeness of God."

If a person can cultivate a sense of the divine, what the Bible calls the nine fruits of the spirit (in the New Testament book of Galatians, chapter 5, verses 22-23) "you'll have a fulfilled life."

Selfless personality predicated on compassion and genuine, authentic humility is the only way we are going to survive, he said.

"My gentle suggestion is, you can have that approach to doing business, or whatever career you choose, and you can still be a winner. And if you do, then we are all winners." ♦

Changing lives and communities through a focus on women

Economic development programs that focus on women's needs can have a major positive impact on the lives of the clients, their families and their communities.

So says Su Sandar Koe, who works as gender co-ordinator for MEDA's Improving Market Opportunities for Women (IMOW) project in Myanmar. While most economic development programs are not women focussed, IMOW is.

"In every channel of the value chain, it was so great for them."

Prior to the program, women used to say that they didn't believe in themselves. They are now learning to become business leaders. "This is just the beginning."

Once women are economically empowered, they become socially empowered as well, and their voices can be raised, she said.

MEDA clients become viewed as heads of households, village administrators and political leaders.

"Men's understandings also change. Men understand that women can do this."

Yasmin Tab'a, gender co-ordinator at MEDA's Jordan Valley Links program in Jordan, has similar stories to tell. "Once those women start bringing money to the family, (other family members) start supporting them," she said.



Training women lead farmers in Myanmar in agricultural best practices

That's not to say that change comes easily.

Women are kept busy with double duties, juggling household responsibilities and businesses, and struggling to find ways to finance their businesses, Koe said.

Financial institutions in Myanmar are "not pragmatically supportive" of small business people, she said.

Farmers, both men and women, find it difficult to get access to capital.

Intersectionality as a tool for promoting equity

Improving the lives of vulnerable populations so that all people may experience God's love sometimes requires moves to seek equity rather than just equality (*see graphic, pg. 24*).

Achieving equity may require understanding of, and consideration of the concept of intersectionality.

Multiple processes around questions of ownership and collateral are prohibitive in some cases.

Typically, only the head of household's name, the husband, is on a land title. When that person dies, it is a big challenge for others.

Changing the name on a deed, a prerequisite to being able to use a property as collateral, can

take more than a year and cost more than the value of the building in some cases, she said.

The United Nations has identified gender equality as one of its Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It also describes that goal as being a pre-condition for achieving the other 16 SDGs. Between \$5 trillion and \$7 trillion of investment capital will be required to address the critical challenges set out in the UN SDGs. ♦

Wikipedia describes intersectionality as an analytical framework that tries to identify how interlocking systems of power impact those who are the most marginalized.

Race, gender, disability, religion, class and sexual orientation are forms of social stratification that do not exist separately from each other,

but are interwoven together, the theory of intersectionality suggests. Many forms of oppression exist, compound and affect people's life journey.

Intersectionality is an approach that affects everyone, says Larissa Schneider, project manager global programs at MEDA. MEDA works with ethnically diverse populations, some of which face discrimination, she said. Taking a blanket approach that all women face the same challenges, for instance, is simply not true.



Photo credit METTA

A training session for women lead farmers in Myanmar's Shan state.

Given that many different factors hold people back, the starting line is not at the same place for everyone,

she said. "If we don't consider those systemic speed bumps that certain people face, we're all not going to get ahead."

"What can we do to make everybody flourish?"

Taking intersectionality into account is a growing part of MEDA's work, in line with the Canadian government's feminist international assistance policy (FIAP). The government of Canada has made FIAP a priority in its international development projects. ♦

Land tenure as a tool to promote equity

Land tenure is a critical issue in efforts to build equity, MEDA discovered during its Greater Rural Opportunities for Women (GROW) project in Ghana. Land tenure "underpinned women's ability to participate in agriculture, their agricultural productivity... and ultimately, their income."

Women are far from being treated as equals in Ghana. The West African nation ranked 139 out of 177 countries in the United Nations Development Program's 2015 Gender Inequality Index.

Access to land is a key barrier for women farmers in Ghana to achieve parity in the equal distribution of economic and natural resources, studies suggest.

Land tenure rules define the ways in which property rights to land are allocated, transferred, used or managed in a society.

Only 20 per cent of land in Ghana is governed by written, codi-



A 2017 forum on land tenure in Ghana was attended by over 1,000 people

fied rules known as statutory tenure, with 80 per cent under the authority of local chiefs and leaders.

Most women MEDA worked with in the GROW project cultivated one acre or less. Fewer than one in five cultivated 1.5 acres or more of crops.

Women's access to land is routinely lost through formal titling and registration. Also, women would have to be literate to benefit from

statutory tenure, and most women are not able to read and write.

Within a family, a woman may have use rights for growing subsistence crops to feed her family, but her husband will have control rights, as he benefits financially from the sale of crops.

Land accessible to women requires intense physical labor to uproot tree stumps, clear rocks and level the steep grades present. Men often provide women with the worst lands, as women are so desperate for land access that they will do the hard labor to improve the land. When

Global Affairs Canada funds MEDA'S GROW (Greater Rural Opportunities for Women) project in Ghana and the IMOW (Improving Market Opportunities for Women) project in Myanmar.

men subsequently take over the land, the men benefit from improvements women have made.

During the GROW project, MEDA recognized that focusing both on land tenure and improved agronomic practices and inputs would lead to greater yields, productivity and incomes for women subsistence farmers.

To build greater awareness around land tenure and rights, GROW piloted a training workshop on alternative dispute resolution for women soybean farmers, so women could understand their rights, learn how to negotiate better with males in the community around the issue of land tenure and learn about the steps to formalize their land tenure. GROW also hosted community gender sensitization sessions with

local partners and male gender activists that focused on land access and control. These activists serve as allies with women farmers to sensitize the community in support of them.

In late 2017, GROW hosted a day-long event to discuss secure and long-term land tenure that was the first of its kind in Northern Ghana. Attended by village chiefs, their female counterparts — Queen Mothers — landowners, lead farmers, representatives of government departments and male gender activists, the land tenure forum attracted over 1,000 people.

Women speakers advised chiefs and landowners how they could help women to create more sustainable livelihoods for them and their families. The event's facilitator, Fr. Clement Mweyang Aapengnuo, high-

lighted how providing women access to secure land tenure over multiple years was the best form of resource management and security for future generations of farmers.

At a subsequent meeting in July 2018, village chiefs, Queen Mothers and the GROW team reaffirmed their commitment to longer and secure land tenure arrangements for women farmers.

As women farmers have increased their household's access to better nutrition, education for their children and ability to provide a better economic position for the entire household, Ghanaian men have been willing to provide more secure access to the lands for their women. ♦

From a case study by Sara Seavey, senior program manager, gender, of MEDA's Washington D.C. office

Engaging men to promote gender equity

Improving women's empowerment in a systemic way requires meaningfully engaging men in gender equity strategies.

During the Greater Opportunities for Rural Women (GROW) project in Ghana, MEDA realized it needed to engage men beyond their role as gatekeepers, turning them into allies in gender awareness raising. It also needed to ensure that men did not feel left behind by development efforts.

MEDA's male gender activist (MGA) initiative engaged 17 male champions trained in gender equity issues. These gender champions, who live in communities served by MEDA's project partners, engage other men, educate men in gender sensitization, advocate for women's rights, smooth relations with male family members, and speak out against gender inequality.

Male control and ownership hinder women's ability to become economic actors and limit the roles that they can play. Women's criti-

cal role in agriculture remains invisible, since women dominate in food crop production as opposed to cash crops, which are more visible in the public sphere.

Male activists volunteer five to six hours a month on average, hosting dialogues one-on-one or in larger groups. They host gender awareness sharing events, in one-on-one conversations or community forums, targeting men in the GROW community. MGAs highlight and stand up against gender inequality and advocate in support of involving women in productive activities, sharing how women can contribute to decision-making and income.

Additionally, they encourage men to support their wives by taking on household tasks such as childcare, cooking or cleaning.

Some activists faced resistance from community men about gender sensitization messages.

Another challenge was balancing the appropriate amount of engagement of men as stakeholders, while also ensuring that women maintain control of project benefits and serve in leadership roles in gender equality efforts. In one case, men were less likely to participate in meetings if the male gender activist was not in attendance. MEDA has taken lessons learned from these challenges and

managing the roles of the GROW male gender activists into the design of MEDA's project in Myanmar, which also is engaging men in gender equity. In Myanmar, these men are called male gender champions. ♦

From a report by Sara Seavey, senior program manager, gender, of MEDA's Washington D.C. office

Photo credit: Myo Oak Soe/MEDA



Clients of MEDA's Myanmar project consult with a male gender champion.

Getting family behind a business venture

Jordanian woman becomes an entrepreneur with her husband's support.

By Dara Al Masri

"My husband was my first customer", says Intisar, a food entrepreneur selling pickles in an impoverished area in Jordan's Balqa governorate, northwest of Amman.

To get to where she is today, Intisar had to get past a few barriers that usually stop women from entering the business world in Jordan. "I wanted to do something beneficial with my time," says the 39-year-old mother of four.

She spent more than two weeks convincing her husband, Imad, to agree to let her register at a training for pickle making, business planning and basic accounting. "I explained to him the project's details, that I will be with other women who are also learning with me, and that if there was no benefit, I would drop out," she said.

The training was provided by the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Human Development (JOHUD).

Intisar heard about the opportunity through a friend who works there. The JOHUD program targets women

and youth living in the Jordan valley to take part in the food processing value chain.

Intisar attended the first session and came back to her husband with excitement; "I told him that the project can help us register a business and he was immediately interested, seeing it was real and not just talk."

Despite his reservations, Imad saw that Intisar was motivated and eager to learn. He finally gave her his support. "It is nice to see her

filling her time, there is something she is busy with other than her usual housework," he said.

"She is setting an example to our children," he added, noting that Intisar's project will also contribute to their family's income.

"My relationship with Imad changed," Intisar said. "Our conversations have become deeper than topics about we will have for lunch or dinner. We started talking about the challenges I am facing, my



Imad, Intisar and two of their children in their home

finances, and my customers. There is something new to talk about.”

Her first challenge was being able to find people willing to buy her jars of pickles. Finding clients is the main issue women and youth face when entering the food processing sector in Jordan.

Training is funded by Global Affairs Canada and MEDA’s Jordan Valley Links (JVL) Project. It aims to provide women like Intisar and youth living in the Jordan Valley with the required knowledge and skills to operate environmentally sustainable and gender equitable businesses, to increase their access to finance, and to gain the community’s support. For Intisar, the community’s point of view towards her changed. “Any woman who is working and doing something useful in her life is looked at differently, she said. “I don’t think that people look at a stay home mother the same way they do at a woman who earns a living; especially that I made something out of nothing.”

“Now I have a say in the household’s needs and my husband consults me.”

After registering as a home-based business, Intisar spent two Jordanian Dinar — about \$2.84 US — to buy cucumbers and pickle them to test what she learned during the training. “I now know how to pasteurize the pickles and realized that using iodine-free salt is better for pickling,” she said.

Her first batch of pickles sold yielded six-dinars.

Currently, she sells pickle jars worth 120 Jordanian Dinar — just over \$169.30 USD — in one week.

“The project helped me a lot. I started going out twice a week to attend sessions and accompany my husband to buy jars and vegetables,” she said.

Imad was the one going to the market and buying whatever he felt they needed. “Now, I have a say in



Intisar’s produce, including cucumber pickles, stuffed eggplants, and olives

the household’s needs and my husband consults me.”

The new entrepreneur sells her pickles to schools, teachers, and shop owners.

“My children come to me for pocket money,” Intisar said proudly, happy that she is reducing the financial burden on her husband. “My children started helping me to organize the vegetables. Our family has come closer together.”

Intisar is among the more than 1,100 women and youth in Balqa

who have registered and benefited from the sessions MEDA JVL facilitated. Intisar is hoping to further expand her business and one day open a factory for pickling. ♦

Dara Al Masri is a marketing & communications specialist for MEDA’s Jordan Valley Links project.

Comments

Would you like to comment on anything in this magazine, or on any other matters relating to business and faith? Send your thoughts to mstrathdee@meda.org

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Creating business solutions to poverty

MEDA staff try groundnut farming

Members of environment committee learn about the challenges facing farmer clients

By Dennis Tessier and Salihu Samuel Wamde

(Editor's note: Several MEDA offices have Green Teams, volunteers who work on ways for the organization to be as environmentally responsible as possible.)

Photos by Dennis Tessier

The Nigeria Green Team is an ambitious bunch. Most MEDA Nigeria staff have joined the team. They have started an office compost, plastic recycling program and a garden producing everything from passion fruit, tomatoes and hot chillies to groundnuts (peanuts). The garden was intended to provide fresh food for office lunches. It has since grown into an educational tool to better un-

derstand the ground nut value chain.

Alongside rice and soy, groundnuts are one of three core value chains MEDA's Nigeria WAY team is championing. (WAY stands for Youth Entrepreneurship and Women's Empowerment, MEDA's main project in Nigeria. It is funded by Global Affairs Canada.)

With the project's private sector-led approach of supporting initiatives to reduce barriers and constraints faced by economically active poor



Left: Facility manager Hauwa Bala with groundnuts grown outside of the MEDA Nigeria Way office. **Right:** A woman squeezes oil from groundnuts.

women and youth in accessing markets, learning how to grow groundnuts gives an incredible amount of insight into the value chain. This includes learning the process of farming, its challenges and level of effort required to produce a crop.

Project support for the groundnut value chain has got off to a good start working with No Retreat No Surrender, a co-op of 250 women that grows and sells peanuts, to create linkages in the groundnuts value chain for women growers.

Several commercial organizations, known in the industry as lead firms, are working with MEDA clients. Ebiku Investment Limited, a small-scale ground snack producer of flour-coated organic peanuts called Kele's Nuts, is working with WAY to establish a sustainable supply system of Grade A groundnuts (uniform size nuts with no breakage). Madaki Agro, a large processor that works with 4,000 farmers in over 300 cooperatives, is supporting practices that contract growers incorporate to improve soil quality, enhance water usage, manage crops and improve the environment for a 96 metric-tonne (1,643.8 pound) groundnut supply chain.

Last summer at the MEDA office, the Green Team planted the Ex-Dakar variety of groundnuts, a low-oil nut with a unique shape that is easy to coat with a flavor. That is the same va-



MEDA facility manager Victoria Nuhu with a bowl of groundnuts

riety grown by No Retreat No Surrender. The planted plot measures 127.5 square meters (1372 square feet). About 1.2 kilograms (2.65 pounds) of the groundnut seeds were planted by hand during the second week of July.

No chemical pesticides or herbicides were used during the production period. The team had to contend with weeds and a few pests.

In the last week of October, the hard work paid off. Fifty kilograms (110 pounds) of groundnuts were harvested by MEDA staff. That's in addition to eight kg (17.6 pounds) of groundnuts that were harvested and boiled for MEDA WAY Staff before the final harvesting.

Staff were surprised at how long it took to do the harvest, which included pulling plants out of the ground, pulling off the roots and washing the nuts. They were only able to harvest about five per cent of the crop in one lunch break.

After harvest, a staff member volunteered to further process the groundnut into green organic groundnut cookies and green groundnut oil. The green products were advertised to the WAY team. The products sold out in a short time with members asking for more. The oil sold for 500 Nigerian Naira (\$1.37 USD) per bottle. A bag of cookies sold for 400 Nigerian Naira (\$1.10USD).

After everything was sold, the Green Team earned \$28.77USD that will be re-invested into their next big project. ♦

Dennis Tessier is MEDA's senior program manager, environment and climate change.

Salihu Samuel Wamdeo is the environment and technology co-ordinator for MEDA's Nigeria WAY project, and the acting head of that office's Green Team.

Making events look effortless

B.C. event planner handles behind the scenes tasks at MEDA conventions

photos by Steve Sugrim

Anne Michelle Ewert works hard to be low-profile. Not that the gregarious event planner is unhappy to chat.

It's just that Ewert, who has helped organize MEDA's annual Business as A Calling convention for 20 years, measures success by how well she can blend in. "If you do your job well, people don't notice," she says.

"In order to get that (anonymity), there's a million small things," she noted, comparing the work to a duck on a pond, placid on top but legs moving rapidly below the water's surface.

On the move is a fitting description of her life story.

An only child, Ewert was born in Florida. Her father, a Jewish packaging designer, moved the family to British Columbia when she was two.

After her parents' divorce when Anne Michele was five, her mother remarried, to an Anglican (Her mother had been raised Anglican and converted to Judaism before her daughter's birth).

Anne Michele met her husband Steve, who was raised Mennonite, during high school in Richmond, B.C. "That was super intriguing to me, the whole faith side."

Ironically, while Anne Michelle and Steve came from different faith backgrounds, there were parallels in their grandparents' life journeys. "There was a similar story of exodus."

Steve's grandparents tried to get out of Communist Ukraine to Germany. His grandmother succeeded.



Anne Michelle Ewert taking notes and answering queries at the 2018 MEDA Business as a Calling convention in Indianapolis. "If you do your job well, people won't notice," she says.

Around the same time, Anne Michele's Jewish grandparents were trying to escape Berlin under the Nazis and resettle in Ukraine.

Anne Michele was baptized by a Mennonite pastor who also performed her wedding.

After marrying Steve, a builder, she found outlets for her artistic leanings by helping to design houses, choosing colors, tiles, carpet and other components. "God also then, equips you with the ability to do different things."

One of two jobs she juggled while in university, a summer position at an educational toy store, provided her first entrepreneurial opportunity.

During her first summer selling toys, residents of northern BC came to the store wanting educational toys for their children. Word of mouth led to letters requesting similar products, and many more sales.

She filled so many orders from distant customers that she was asked to become marketing director

as the firm expanded across Canada.

During her second year, she did a national sales convention, organizing a boat cruise, tours, product knowledge seminars, and sales training, heady responsibilities for a 23-year-old, teaching much older women.

"With convention planning, it's never about the person doing the planning," she said. "That person just has to listen to all these great people that surround them, for ideas."

Energized by the sales convention, she wanted more. A Hawaii trip for top salespeople was her next project. At a car rental there, she wasn't old enough to rent the vehicle to drive her guests. "I was mortified, but they (salespeople) made it so fun."

Sadly, the adventures didn't last. That Christmas, the toy company's owner panicked after department stores entered the educational toy market. He disappeared, leaving behind a lot of debt.

Ewert, then 24, had to deal with

the bank. A supplier told Ewert to move on, introducing her to a firm that needed a buyer. She did that for a year, after which the Ewerts did a round-the-world trip.

On her return, pregnant and with no job, she became a stay-at-home mom for six years.

Satisfying as it was to watch her children grow, Ewert sought ways to connect with other adults. "I missed people terribly."

She started a biweekly, mother of pre-schoolers group at her church, a gathering that grew to 120 moms. Organizing those meetings gave her an outlet for planning events.

In 1996, she heard MEDA board member Ted Andres talk about MEDA. She and Steve began attending local events and travelled to the MEDA convention in Winnipeg that fall.

After she helped organize local MEDA gatherings, MEDA staff asked her to provide on the ground support for a future B.C. convention.

"I probably should have been more nervous, if I had known it would be a job interview for the next 20 years."

Her first MEDA convention was in Norfolk, VA in 1999.

Ewert works closely with Carol Eby Good of MEDA's Lancaster, PA office. "Carol's skill set and mine are very different. She is this detail-focused, talented gatherer who is so

"With convention planning, it's never about the person doing the planning."

focused on details, which is what you need to have the management information to run with a convention."

Balancing budget concerns with satisfying clients is the biggest challenge in event planning in the non-profit space, she said. "You always feel like you're holding the client's money like it's your own, and yet I have such a desire to do things with excellence that that's a tough compromise, sometimes."

Managing a volunteer army can also be challenging. "How much do you ask them to do? How tough do you lead them? How do you get them to do what you want them to do?"

Planning each year's MEDA convention starts in January, deciding hotel arrangements, mapping out seminars and tours. Through September and October, Ewert is fully committed to convention work.

She sees the job as a service and relationship role, one that occasionally requires discreetly dealing with people's medical emergencies. "This job is a gift because you get to touch people's lives."

"I like serving people. I like being around people. That's where I get my energy."

Other events she has planned include small corporate boards of directors' gatherings, fair trade events for an Ontario company, and golf tournaments held by former NHL player Trevor Linden and Cadillac Fairview to expand a hospice camp for children.

She also organizes large gatherings for a Richmond Christian school. "Any of the events that are beyond the scope of a volunteer capacity, they call me."

When Ewert first began helping plan MEDA conventions, the organization was booking a year in advance. As she did more research into event planning, she joined a professional meeting planners' organization.

After 15 years in the industry, a person can apply to become a certified meeting planner professional, a designation that gives credibility in dealing with hotels and tour companies. "When they see that designation, they know that you know what you're doing."

Planning further out gives convention organizers access to the hotel they want in a given city, lower room rates and other perks. After seeing the benefits of planning two years ahead, MEDA moved to planning three years out. In late winter every year, she sends a request for proposals to a prospective city's visitor and convention bureau, explaining MEDA's needs. Typically, she gets back three to four bids.

She ranks hotels based on costs and benefits of each facility. Ewert and MEDA organizers do site visits, touring city attractions, hotel meeting space and food offerings.

Each convention, Ewert arrives four days before supporters. She spends that first day going through all the convention details with a hotel events manager. Each meeting room is diagrammed for any events.

She has a week's worth of paperwork to do post convention. "I get my cold on Tuesday, usually," she said with a laugh. "Physically, you're tired. But there's always a part to me that's sad." ♦



Anne Michelle Ewert and MEDA president Dorothy Nyambi at the MEDA convention in Indianapolis in November

Evangelical retailer built fortune by blending faith with business

By Mark A. Kellner, Religion News Service

Wanamaker's Temple: The Business of Religion in an Iconic Department Store by Nicole C. Kirk (NYU Press, 2018, 288 pp., \$35US)

(RNS) — During his lifetime, John Wanamaker built two megachurches.

One tried to save souls.

Another sold clothes, jewelry and perfume.

And the two worked hand in hand, said Nicole C. Kirk, an assistant professor at Meadville Lombard Theological School in Chicago and author of *Wanamaker's Temple: The Business of Religion in an Iconic Department Store*.

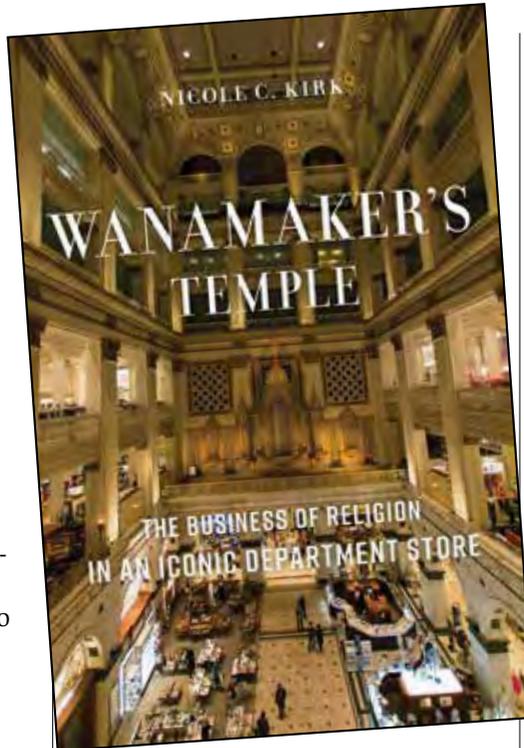
Wanamaker believed “his business interests and his religious interests were not in conflict,” said Kirk, and he could integrate the two without compromise.

“Over and over, and not defensively, (Wanamaker) speaks about how he doesn't see a conflict and they are mutually supportive,” said Kirk, a Unitarian Universalist minister and historian of religion.

Wanamaker put it this way, said Kirk: “The store will be my pulpit and they are part and parcel of each other.”

In their heyday, the two Wanamaker enterprises — department store and church — influenced the community, raised the living standards of thousands of employees and church members, and melded commerce and Christianity in a way not previously seen in America, Kirk said.

His eponymous department store — now a Macy's — in Center City Philadelphia contained a 10,000-pipe organ and presented religious-themed



Christmas and Easter programs. His church, Bethany Presbyterian Church, drew thousands for worship.

Wanamaker, who also served four years as postmaster general of the United States, was foremost an evangelical Christian who melded faith and works, specifically the working of his retail empire. While building the first department store in Philadelphia, he also funded the growth of the city's first megachurch, which featured a range of social services undergirded by a strong evangelical outreach. He offered young male employees of his store guidance through a YMCA-like program aimed at promoting spiritual discipline. All employees could spend a summer vacation at a church-run resort, albeit with strict behavioral codes.

The merchant was so famous for his public expressions of faith he was satirized as “Pious John” in newspaper cartoons. But the ridicule

did not deter him from his mission to blend faith and commerce, using his wealth to fund the YMCA, where he had worked before going into retail, as well as the Salvation Army, whose U.S. leader, Commander Evangeline Booth, became a close friend.

Washington University professor Leigh Eric Schmidt said Wanamaker's philosophy was a “wider” version of the “gospel of wealth” popular during that era.

“It was good to make money and spend it on the right causes, education or the Sunday schools, or moral uplift, or missions,” said Schmidt. “It was good to attain that kind of wealth if you stewarded your wealth in the right ways.”

Kirk said Russell Conwell, a clergyman best known for establishing Temple University, was a huge influence on Wanamaker. Conwell, she said, preached about the “Acres of Diamonds” available to those who work hard and seek out opportunity.

She termed Conwell's message an early iteration of today's “prosperity gospel,” proclaiming that God will financially reward those who are faithful.

The wearing of religion “on one's sleeve,” said Vanderbilt University professor James Hudnut-Beumler, was more conspicuous with Wanamaker than contemporary businesses such as fast-food chain Chick-fil-A or Hobby Lobby would now indulge. The chicken sandwich company, for example, closes its franchises on Sundays but keeps its owners' faith largely private.

Wanamaker's faith, by contrast, was more “in your face,” said Hudnut-Beumler.

Wanamaker's store had a sacred Christmas display, complete with a creche, and religious displays at Easter. And no one boycotted them, said Hudnut-Beumler.

“Not even Chick-fil-A was as in your face with its ‘performed Christianity’ as was Wanamaker at the height of his powers,” he said.

Hudnut-Beumler said Wanamaker’s public faith “is so much a reflection of the Protestant moment in American religious history when people either were Protestant of a certain sort or had to accommodate themselves to evangelical Protestantism.”

Today, you can be philanthropic,” he said. “You can lead with a big heart, you can even be paternalistic, but you had better not infringe on other people’s religions if you want to have a huge market share.”

Along with his overt religiosity,

Wanamaker “presaged the mid-20th-century evangelical revival led by people such as Billy Graham” through his interdenominational work, according to Hudnut-Beumler.

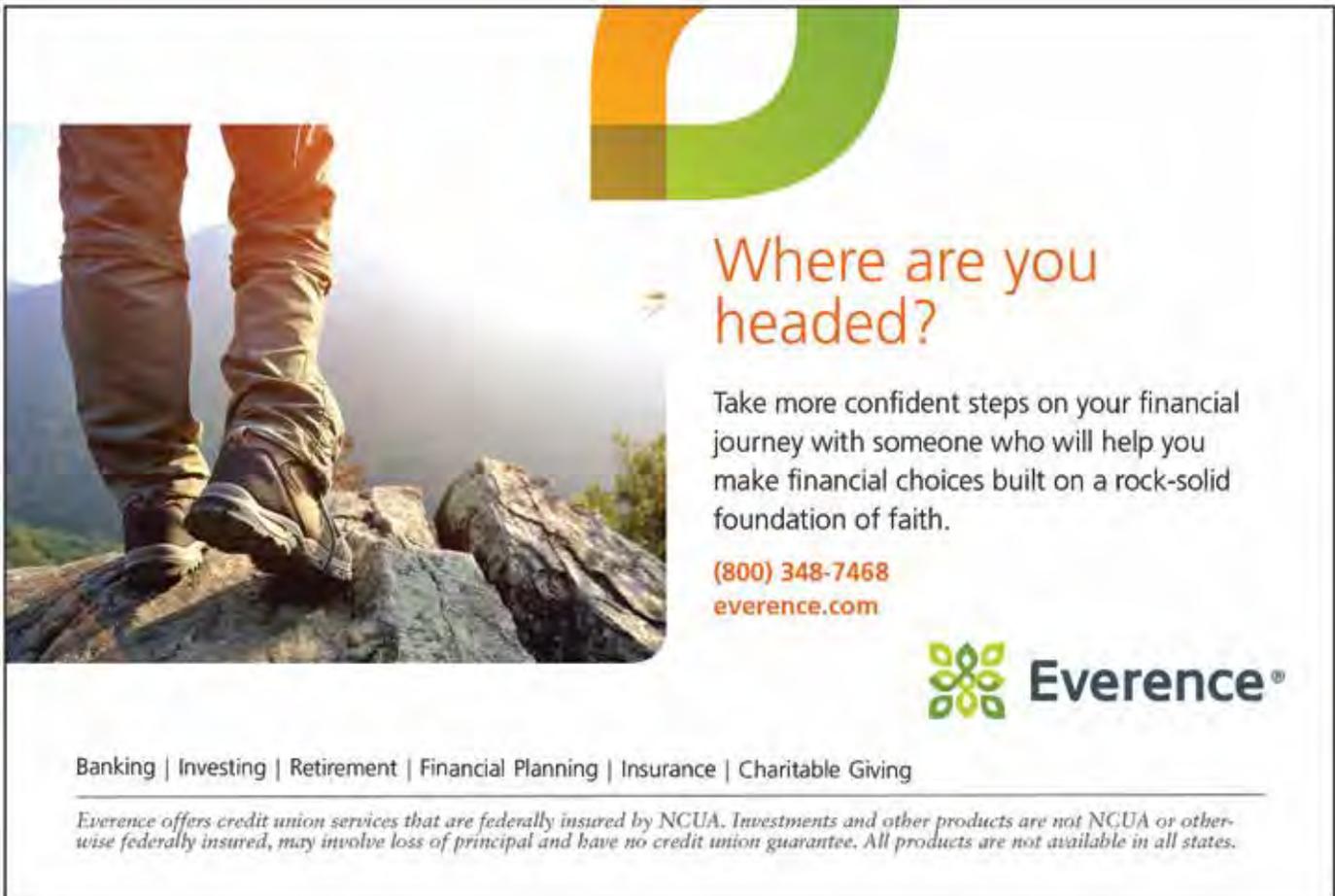
When revivalist Dwight L. Moody came to Philadelphia, Wanamaker remodeled the hall in which Moody conducted his campaign to make it more suitable. Some churchmen viewed the Salvation Army as “competition,” Hudnut-Beumler said, but Wanamaker endorsed its work of evangelizing those in poverty or addiction.

“The fascinating thing about Wanamaker is, even though he belongs to a ‘tribe,’ Presbyterians, he’s so much bigger than his tribe, when it comes to

Christianity,” Hudnut-Beumler said.

Kirk, whose next project is a biography of George Pullman, a railroad magnate and Unitarian, said she was struck by the reaction of people when she mentioned her study of Wanamaker’s life and religion.

“What was exciting about this research was how people responded to my saying I was working on a book on Wanamaker,” she said. “Their eyes would light up and they’d tell me a story about a family member that worked there, made a career out of it, or going to Center City and seeing the displays. There is this grand nostalgia for the great American department store that no longer exists.” ♦



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Women in Farming: Breaking Through The Grass Ceiling

By Jeanne Bernick, KCoe Isom

Ask any consumer at the grocery store today what the average American farmer looks like, and the typical answer is: “A white male in his 50s.” While it’s true the average age of the American farmer is 58, according to USDA, if you dig more deeply you’ll find some surprising developments.

Women in Farming — By the Numbers and Tasks

The number of women farmers has tripled since the 1970s. Now, according to the US Department of Agri-

culture, women make up just under one third of all farmers. More than a third of farm ground is owned by women and 62.7 million acres are farmed by women principal operators, according to the last US Census of Agriculture.

The roles women play on farms is changing, too. More women are full partners and owners in farming operations. An increasing number of women are becoming key decision makers when it comes to production ag purchases, such as seed and equipment. That’s because more women are running the numbers

behind the farm business — they provide the bookkeeping, accounting and chief financial officer-type services on farm operations.

It takes brains, more than brawn, to run a modern farm. Today, women are coming home to manage their family businesses after earning MBAs or following years of experience leading from the executive suite in corporate America.

On a personal note, I have spent more than two decades traveling the country and visiting farms as a business journalist and ag consultant. I love the business of agriculture. With nine billion mouths to feed on this planet by 2050, we need farmers of every size, shape and gender. I am truly excited about the number of women who are coming back to the farm, who are actively seeking to operate businesses in rural America, and who want to own agricultural land.

Much More To Do

But we need to do MORE. Though women make up 31 per cent of all US farmers, that number really could be higher. After all, women comprise 50 per cent of the workforce in jobs outside of agriculture and hold more than 85 per cent of the consumer dollar. Shouldn’t the face of food really be more female?

For that to change, however, we need conscious efforts to cultivate leadership of women in agriculture. As former Secretary of State Madeline Albright pointedly said, “There is a special place in hell for women who don’t help other women.”

I think of this quotation often when I talk to women in rural businesses, particularly in agriculture.

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Is there a lack of sisterhood among female entrepreneurs that we need to address? Every woman I know says she supports other women in agriculture. But what does that really mean? Do you consider women farmers as potential renters for your farmland? Are you buying local produce from the woman-owned vegetable stand at the farmer's market? Are you actively engaging women farmers as speakers in your local farm organizations or national associations? Do you see women as leaders in rural America, or as supporters?

There are obstacles, of course. I would be the first to admit that some of the strongest opponents of women in agricultural leadership are other women. Some recent research from Washington University in St. Louis finds that women often do not support qualified female candidates as potential high-prestige work group peers because of a concept called "competitive threat" — meaning a fear that a highly qualified female candidate might be more qualified than you are. Those studies, frankly, make my skin crawl. We need each other,

and agriculture needs strong women candidates to run the businesses that produce our food and fuel.

Cooperative efforts need to be made to help women break through the "grass" ceiling. It will come — if you pledge yourself to being a partner with women in agriculture. Here's to the female face of farming! Hurrah! ♦

Jeanne Bernick of Kansas is a principal with K.Coe Isom, an accounting firm specializing in the food and agriculture industry. This article was originally published in the Ag Progress Dispatch. To read more from Ag Progress, visit: <https://www.agprogress.com/ag-progress-dispatch-archive>



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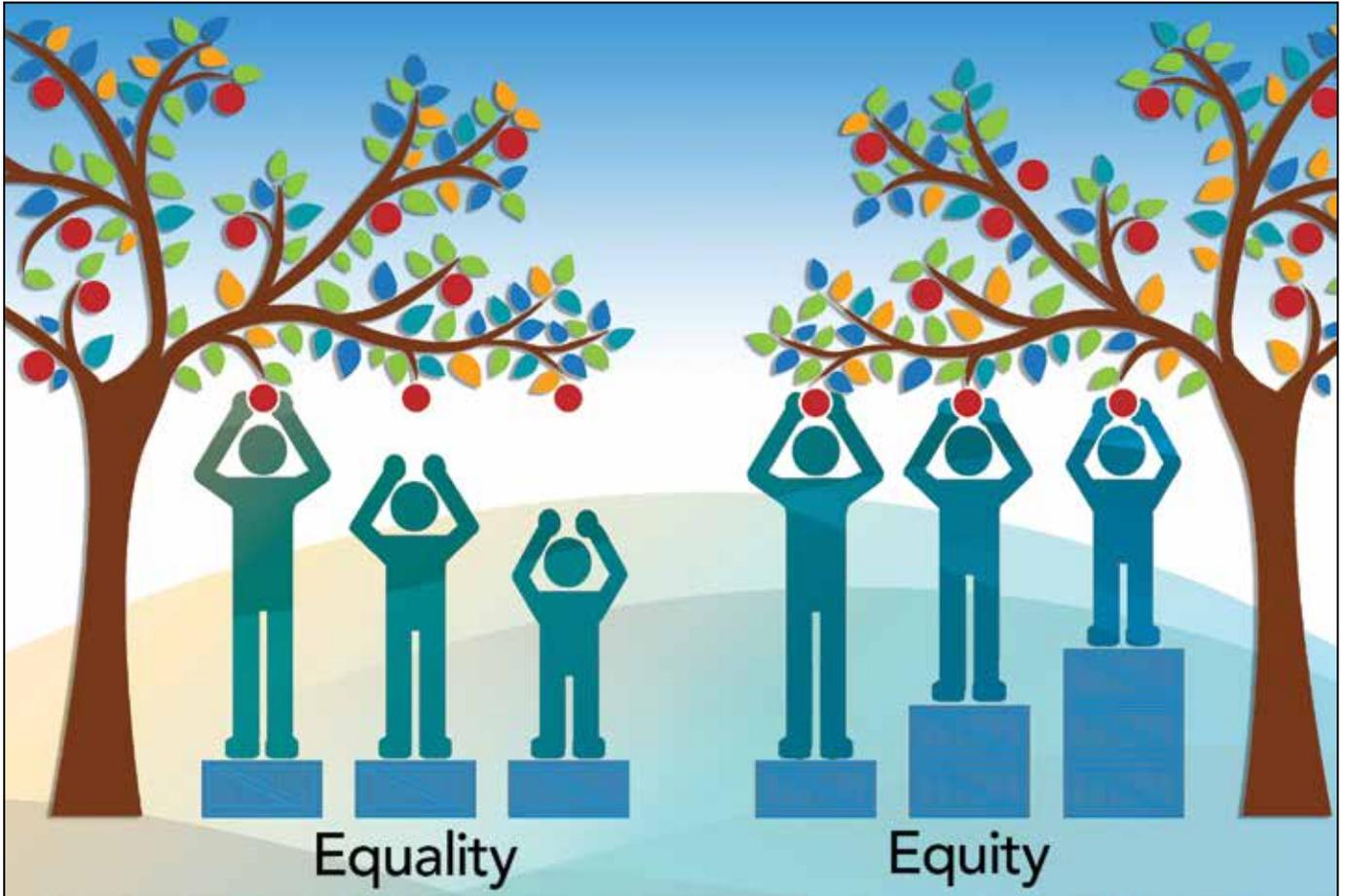
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Equality or Equity?

Put the words Equality and Equity into your favorite web browser, and you are likely to find a range of images, some of them highly controversial, depicting the difference between the two concepts.

Giving people the same tools or support when their life cir-

cumstances are different will result in varied outcomes, as the graphic above demonstrates.

Giving everyone the same sized box to stand on in the picture above means that only the tallest person can reach the fruit on the tree. Adapting assistance to people's needs will result in everyone benefiting.

Women and girls in developing countries are disproportionately vulnerable to the effects of climate change. When steps are taken to improve gender equity, these vulnerable populations can take steps — such as more efficient farming processes or having smaller families — that mitigate the negative impacts. ♦