



small

# change?

**I'm not a big fan of small change. Coins, I mean. The silver ones. You never seem to get just one silver coin, there's always a dozen of them. And that means they make a big bulge in your wallet. So big that when you put your wallet in your back pocket and sit down, you sit on a slope. Like a Leaning Tower of (10 cent) Pieces.**

Any chance I get, I try to get rid of my silver coins. That's easier said than done. I used to palm them off on the kids for icecreams and lollies, but that

doesn't work any more. 'Dad, that's junk money. Give me real money.' That is, notes.

So these days I gather up a handful of coins when I want to buy a news-paper or hire a DVD and try to get rid of them that way. The trouble is, no matter what price the item I buy or how carefully I count the coins, I always end up 5 cents short. Which means I have to break into a note. Which of course means another handful of coins as change.

Small change. It hardly seems worth the bother for all the good it does(n't). What messes up my thinking about small change is the fact that what a coin

is worth may not be what a coin is worth, as Jesus points out to his disciples when he directs them to watch the poor widow dropping a few coins in the offering box at the temple (Luke 21:1-4).

Jesus tells us that this widow gave more than everyone else because she gave all she had. Her small change was an example to the whole world for the next 2000 years, her few coins the inspiration to change the lives of thousands.

It's amazing how small change can change someone's world. A few years ago I was in Bangladesh and I met a lady called Kalaboli. She was more than 70 years old, a widow, and she survived by begging from her neighbours.



She's a beggar widow from Bangladesh, but she touched the lives of thousands



## Rice — you can bank on it!

Rice is the main component of diets for families in rural Cambodia. People eat rice morning, noon and evening.

That's why the rice harvest is the most important event of the year.

A successful harvest, and poor families will have enough food to eat, and perhaps even excess to sell. If the harvest fails — and if there is a drought that's always a possibility — families will not have enough to eat; they can lose everything.

Through the support of Australian Lutherans, a new idea is helping poor farming families achieve security and independence. The idea? Rice banks.

Farmers who have a good harvest simply deposit their surplus rice in the rice bank. Farmers who have a poor harvest can then borrow rice. The loans are paid back the following harvest, with interest in rice.

According to the village chief of Krang Dong Village, the rice banks are an important part of the villages' and farmers' path to self-sustainability. They give the farmers security so that a bad harvest year doesn't destroy the whole family economy.'

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At that time I was managing the 40 Hour Famine fund-raising event for World Vision. In Bangladesh they had a 40 Hour Famine event, too, except it went for only 20 hours. And it was only World Vision staff who did it.

Somehow Kalaboli heard about this 20 Hour Famine. She found our team and pulled from her sari a couple of small coins, a few taka, barely a cent. She gave those coins, that small change, to us and said to use it to 'help the poor people'.

You can imagine how such generosity utterly humbled me.

When I went to thank Kalaboli for her generosity, she grasped my hands and invited me to stay for 'lunch', to share the few grains of rice she'd managed to beg that day.

Someone took a photo of that moment, and it was printed in a magazine that went to hundreds of thousands of people across Australia. Kalaboli's simple act spoke more powerfully than a million words. I didn't realise how powerfully, until a year later when a young university student sent me a drawing she'd done of that photo of Kalaboli. She said Kalaboli's act had inspired her to become a social worker, so that she too could make a difference in people's lives.

Small change? I don't think so.

When you and I look at the poverty and pain and suffering in the world, we can feel overwhelmed. Like the fact that more than 4000 children die every day from diseases caused by dirty water and bad sanitation. That seems to be a problem far beyond the reach of any of us who want to change that situation.

The United Nations estimates that to provide clean water and proper sanitation for everyone who doesn't have it — to save those children's lives — would cost \$19 billion. That seems to be a mind-boggling amount of money ... until you learn that we Australians spent **twice** that amount shopping in the six weeks before Christmas.

The question I have to face is what change am I prepared to make in my own life in order to make a change in the lives of others. Am I like the rich people who preceded the



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# Change

woman has put in more than all the others. Everyone else gave what they didn't need. But she is very poor and gave everything she had' (Luke 21:3,4).

No-one likes to feel 'guilted' into helping others. That's not what Jesus is talking about here. Nor is it what the Bible is talking about in its other 2000 verses about poverty and injustice. It's simply that, as we learn from James (2:14–17), one of the ways an authentic faith is evidenced is in the actions it inspires us to take to help others.

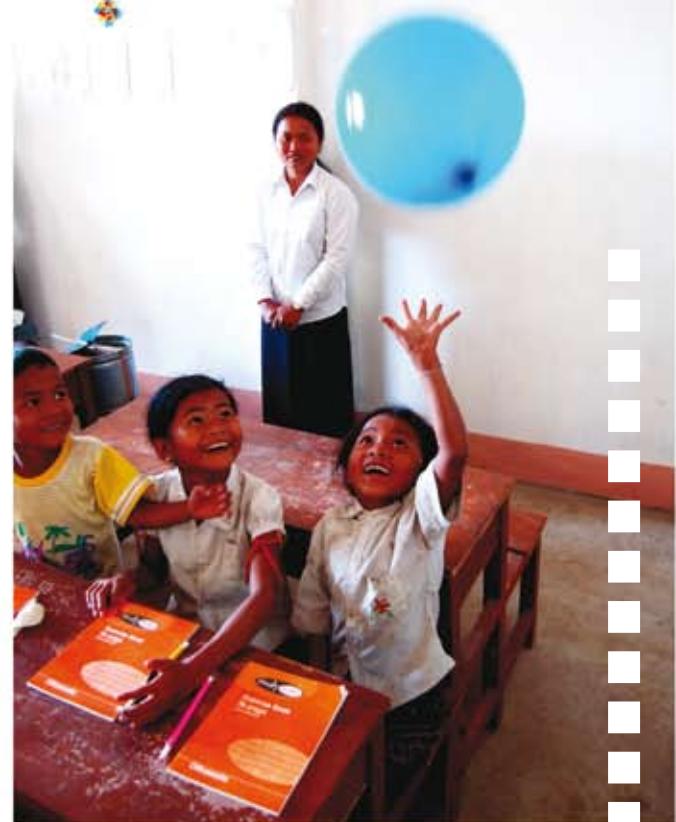
It can be scary to change. Remember the reaction of the rich young man when Jesus told him to give all his money to the poor (Matt 19:16–22)? Perhaps where each of us can start is with small change. A few coins each day, given every day, can in a year add up to enough to provide seeds, seedlings, farm tools and training for a family in Cambodia to help them become self-sufficient. Our small change can become **life** change for that family.

You might look at the silver coins jangling around in your pocket or wallet or purse and, like me, wonder what good such small change can do. Stop wondering, just try it. You'll find a pack inside this issue of *The Lutheran* that shows a very practical place to start — and it does **not** mean sending stacks of silver coins to Australian Lutheran World Service (ALWS) in Albury!

Start today. The life change you give by using your small change for others might just turn out to be a life change for **you**, too.

Discover how you can use your small change to change the lives of others through ALWS. Call Jenny Pfitzner on **08 8360 7220**, email [jennyp@alws.org.au](mailto:jennyp@alws.org.au) or visit [www.lca.org.au/alws](http://www.lca.org.au/alws)

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## School's in — for life!

if you're a child in a poor family in Cambodia, there's a real risk that you may never go to school. If your parents are poor and illiterate, they may see it as more important that you stay home and help with the farming or other ways to provide food for the family. Even if they know that an education is your best chance of breaking free from poverty, they may be too poor to afford your school fees, uniforms, books and transport.

Through Australian Lutheran World Service (ALWS) and with support from the Australian government through AusAID, Australian Lutherans last year helped to provide school supplies and uniforms to 2310 of the poorest students in Cambodia. A hundred bicycles were provided for children who live far from schools.

Most exciting of all, through our partnership with villagers in Oral District a new school building is being built for grades 7 and 8, as well as three primary-school classrooms. St Andrews Lutheran College in Queensland and Immanuel Lutheran Primary School in Adelaide are generous supporters of Cambodian schools through ALWS, too.

What's interesting is that the children who previously could never attend school now never want to leave. When you ask them what they want to be when they grow up, the answer's always the same: 'I want to be a teacher!' Which is great, because rural Cambodia needs all the teachers it can get!

**REPORT BACK**

# small change delivers

**life**

The 2004 Boxing Day Tsunami killed more than 200,000 people and left millions homeless. People around the world responded with a huge outpouring of generosity, and Australian Lutherans were no exception. Three years on, the work of rebuilding homes, schools, farms and lives continues. This summary report shows some of the things Australians helped to achieve through Australian Lutheran World Service and our partners.

What you did	Who you helped	The difference you made
<b>India — partner with Lutheran World Service and United Evangelical Lutheran Church of India</b>		
Non-food relief	16,100 people	Relief kits: family kit, hygiene kit, utensil kit and student kit
Fishing assistance	236 boats (4,720 people — one boat shared by 20 people) and other accessories such as ropes, leads, floats	Fibreglass boats, 10 HP engines, 2 sets of nets
Temporary shelters	204 families (1,168 people)	Constructed out of coconut leaves, bamboo
Permanent houses *	762 families	Construction completed (a further 118 houses in progress)
Education and training	1,578 families (6,312 people)	Awareness on water and sanitation
First-aid	10 schools (6,000 people)	First-aid kits to schools
Community and homestead development	2,089 families	10,423 saplings planted around the homesteads of these families
Self-help groups	413 families (1,652 people)	Training for women in fund management and bookkeeping
Health assistance	252 children	Free eye-glasses to children aged 10-16 years
Health assistance	30,000 people	Post-tsunami trauma counselling
Games and sports	1,484 people	Activities for children
<b>Indonesia — partner with YTBI and Ya PEKA</b>		
Life support — food	2,206 people	Rice, instant noodles, dried and canned fish, baby food, mineral water, spices, vegetable oils,
Life support — other	582 households	beans, coffee and tea Small microfinance groups that help families start a livelihood: motorcycle repair shops, fruit and vegetable vendors, barber shops, tailoring
Education	52 children	Pre-school for children, including meals and toys
<b>Sri Lanka — partner with National Christian Council of Sri Lanka</b>		
Shelter	948 households	123 houses completed in 2007, plus large housing scheme planned, plus community centre
Water and sanitation	3,282 households and support for 600 school children	Latrines, tube wells and water tanks constructed for homes, villages and schools

Mrs Rayalakshmi's house was one of them (story p11)

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