



Lent 2017

The Primate's World Relief and Development Fund
THE ANGLICAN CHURCH OF CANADA



www.pwrdf.org

Vision

A truly just, healthy, and peaceful world.

Mission

As an instrument of faith, PWRDF connects Anglicans in Canada to communities around the world in dynamic partnerships to advance development, to respond to emergencies, to assist refugees, and to act for positive change.



THE PRIMATE'S WORLD RELIEF AND DEVELOPMENT FUND

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INTRODUCTION

The Primate's World Relief and Development Fund (PWRDF) works with partners on a range of development concerns and is currently focused on two critical issues. One is food security and the other is related to it; the issue of maternal, newborn and child health.

Food aid is giving food to hungry people and that is important in crisis situations. Working toward food security means making sure people can count on having enough to eat every day.

There are five principles of food security:

- *Availability* — food is available to people at all times
- *Accessibility* — people have economic and physical access to food
- *Acceptability* — food is culturally acceptable
- *Appropriate* — food is nutritious and free from harmful chemicals
- *Agency* — people are able to influence policies or processes that affect their lives

Food security connects with maternal, newborn and child health. Many of the world's farmers are women, and many of these women struggle with food security for complex reasons having to do with economics, trade agreements, climate change and discrimination. When women are hungry their children are too, and hunger is inherited – passed from one generation to another with all the contingent problems that come with poor or inadequate nutrition.

PWRDF works toward global food security by partnering in local communities with organizations working for change.

In this Lenten series, we will be moving through the biblical story, looking at texts that can give us a theological understanding of food security, and directing our response in prayer and in action.

On each day there will be a passage of scripture for suggested reading. You may choose to read the whole passage. If time is short, you may

choose simply to meditate on the shorter passage provided. There is also a hymn, psalm or prayers for each day (Hymns from Common Praise are marked CP). Along the way we will also read inspiring stories of the partnerships PWRDF has made — stories that show us another world is possible.

As you journey through the Bible, thinking about hunger, and discovering how God responds, our prayer is that this journey will deepen your hope and your faith in God who has given to us a creation of abundance, where there is enough for all.

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ASH WEDNESDAY March 1

Reading: *Isaiah 58:1-12*

Is not this the fast I choose? – Isaiah 58:6

This is a day to remember who we are...

That we are mortal, formed of the earth.

Receiving ashes in the sign of the cross is an acknowledgement of our human frailty.

Today we confess that human sin causes injustice.

During Lent it is traditional to fast.

What is the fast you will choose?

Isaiah proposes a fast that provides bread to hungry people.

“Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thong of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house?” (Isaiah 58:6-7)

Jesus at the beginning of his ministry, declared:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me

Because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor...”

(Luke 4:18)

It is into his life that we are baptized.

As you wash the ashes off your forehead today,

let the water be a sign for you,

that you have been reborn into the abundant life in Christ.

Song or Prayer: *CP 578; Hellerman and Minkoff*

O healing river, send down your waters,

send down your waters upon this land.

O healing river, send down your waters,

and wash the blood from off the sand.

This land is parching, this land is burning,

no seed is growing in the barren ground.

O healing river, send down your waters,

O healing river, send your waters down.

Let the seed of freedom, awake and flourish,
let the deep roots nourish, let the tall stalks rise.
O healing river, send down your waters,
O healing river, from out of the skies.

THURSDAY March 2

Reading: *Genesis 1:1-2:4*

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth.
–Genesis 1:1a

In this, the first of the creation stories in Genesis, God creates a world of abundance and delights in it. Over and over comes the refrain: “And God saw that it was good.” There is enough, more than enough food to sustain all life.

How do human beings fit into this picture? We are created in God’s image, reflecting the divine nature. We are given a vocation, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth,…”

One way of understanding the language of domination in this passage comes from biblical scholar Ellen Davis, who suggests it speaks about benevolent care. “The most essential activity befitting humans created in the image of God is to secure the food system that God gives to sustain all creatures.”¹

To have dominion means to serve. Thinking about the place where you live, where do you see creation being served and where do you see creation under pressure?

Song or Prayer: *Psalm 8*

O Lord, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory above the heavens.

Out of the mouths of babes and infants
you have founded a bulwark because of your foes,
to silence the enemy and the avenger.

When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars that you have established;

what are human beings that you are mindful of them,
mortals that you care for them?

Yet you have made them a little lower than God,
and crowned them with glory and honour.

You have given them dominion over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under their feet,

all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field,
the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea,
whatever passes along the paths of the seas.

O Lord, our Sovereign,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!

FRIDAY March 3

Reading: *Genesis 2:5-3:24*

Then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and
breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a
living being. – *Genesis 2:7*

Are you a gardener? If so, you know how important it is to get to know
your soil, where the tomato plants will flourish, what grows best against
a sunny wall and to feed it with organic matter for a good harvest. We
tend to think of soil as a growing medium.

The second creation story in *Genesis* brings us down to earth. We
discover that we are actually ‘adam’ from ‘adamah’ — which translates
as human from humus.² We share kinship with soil.

In this creation story, the vocation given to humankind is to “till and
keep” the Garden of Eden. In the original Hebrew these words mean
more than working the soil; they suggest working for it, serving its
needs.

Our human to humus relationship, then, is about serving the soil and in
return the soil provides for us our daily bread. Here is where we can root
our reflection on food security.

Prayer: *Psalm 104:14–15*

You cause the grass to grow for the cattle,
And plants for people to use,
To bring forth food from the earth,
And wine to gladden the human heart,
Oil to make the face shine,
And bread to strengthen the human heart.

SATURDAY March 4

Reading: *Genesis 2:5-3:24*

Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” – Genesis 3:13

What happens in the second creation story is what a friend calls “a culinary indiscretion.” Eve eats the fruit of the tree God declared off limits. The flourishing of life on earth depends on us acknowledging that we live in a creation with limits.

We can see the consequences of consumption without limits. The seas are being emptied of fish, the air is no longer filled with birdsong and creatures are being driven to extinction. Wealthy people eat too much while the poor starve across our world.

Our planet is groaning under the pressure and if we are to have a world that is habitable and humane, our minds must be changed so that we operate under the assumption that what is good for creation is good for us. As the poet and farmer Wendell Berry says, “We must recapture the ability to stand in awe and reverence before the majesty and mystery of creation.”³

Song or Prayer: *CP 407 Dakota Hymn; Renville/Frazier*

Many and great, O God, are your works,
Maker of earth and sky.
Your hands have set the heavens with stars;
your fingers spread the mountains and plains.
You merely spoke and waters were formed;
deep seas obey your voice.

Grant us communion with you, our God,
though you transcend the stars.
Come close to us and stay by our side:
with you are found the true gifts that last.
Bless us with life that never shall end,
eternal life with you.

Stories from PWRDF

Speaking out for Seed

Did you know that 1 in 9 people in the world are hungry? 70 percent of these people, mostly women, are small-scale farmers in developing countries who struggle with bad soils and uncertain climates. The Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB) partners with 15 Canadian churches and church-based agencies to help small-scale farmers and to end world hunger. The Anglican Church of Canada partners with the Foodgrains Bank through The Primate’s World Relief and Development Fund.

The Canadian Foodgrains Bank got its start in 1976, when the Mennonite Central Committee started a project so Canadian grain farmers could send their harvest to feed starving people in developing countries. During the 1983 Ethiopian famine, that project was opened to other church agencies and re-established as the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. Although the Foodgrains Bank is still best known for feeding hungry people during times of crisis, they also work directly with farmers in developing countries to increase food production and advocate with governments around the world to enact policies to end global hunger.

PWRDF joined the Foodgrains Bank in 2007 and has supported food projects in a number of countries including India, South Africa and South Sudan. The Foodgrains Bank’s ‘Good Soil’ campaign encourages Christians to pray for those who are hungry and to write to their Members of Parliament to ask them to increase Canada’s global agriculture aid funding. For more information or to learn how to get involved, visit: pwrdf.org/2016/good-souls-talk-about-good-soil.

MONDAY March 6

Reading: *Genesis 8*

As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease. – *Genesis 8:22*

By the time of Noah, God is grieving having made humankind, because the earth is filled with violence. But God cannot give up entirely on the good creation; Noah, his family, and a mating pair of every creature on the earth is saved in the ark. When Noah emerges with the lions and the ravens and the salamanders, God promises never again to curse the ground or destroy the earth.

God is willing to work with human beings again, and establishes a rhythm of life for us: “the rhythm of seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, day and night.” This is the rhythm of creation, the rhythm God has given to us for life.

Reflect on the rhythm of your life. Does this seasonal rhythm affect how you eat and live?

Song or Prayer: *CP 259; Green*

For the fruit of all creation, thanks be to God;
Gifts bestowed on every nation, thanks be to God.
For the ploughing, sowing, reaping, silent growth while we are
sleeping,
Future needs in earth’s safekeeping, thanks be to God.

TUESDAY March 7

Reading: *Genesis 9:8-17*

As for me, I am establishing my covenant with you and your descendants after you, and with every living creature that is with you. – *Genesis 9:8-9*

In this story God makes a covenant not only with Noah and his family, but also with all of creation — a promise never again to destroy the earth. God promises to remember and places the bow in the sky – a bow positioned so that the arrow points to God. The rainbow is the sign of God’s undying covenantal faithfulness.

It must have felt to Noah and his family, bobbing on the waters, that God had forgotten them, abandoned them, stowed away as they were with the last remnant of creation. But it was not so. God remembered them. And God remembered creation.

The waters receded and Noah, a man of the soil, planted a vineyard. What does it mean to you to know that God remembers us, remembers creation and continues to be faithful to the covenant promise from generation to generation?

Prayer: *Isaiah 49:15–16*

Can a woman forget her nursing child,
Or show no compassion for the child of her womb?
Even these may forget,
Yet I will not forget you.
See, I have inscribed you on the palm of my hands.

WEDNESDAY March 8

Reading: *Genesis 18:1-15*

Let me bring a little bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on – since you have come to your servant. So they said, “Do as you have said.”

The noonday sun is hot when three strangers approach Abraham and Sarah’s tent under the Oaks of Mamre. Abraham runs to greet them and provides gracious hospitality. Abraham discovers that it is the Lord who is eating at his table. During the meal, it is revealed that the child long promised to Abraham and Sarah, who will make of them a great nation, will soon be born.

When Abraham and Sarah welcome the three strangers, the Oaks of Mamre become a place of blessing and fruitfulness.

These oaks are still common in the groves and forests of Palestine. *Quercus calliprinos* have the capacity to sprout new shoots even when the trunks are cut down. Isaiah uses the image of a Palestinian oak to describe the birth of a royal child: “A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.” (Isaiah 11:1) This is of course another descendent of Abraham, Jesus of Nazareth, who will make his way along the dusty roads of Palestine centuries later, setting a table and inviting all to come and eat with him.

Perhaps you could invite someone in for a meal at your table, someone who will be blessed by your hospitality.

Song or Prayer: *Hymn by New Zealand native,
Shirley Erna Murray*

For everyone born, a place at the table,
for everyone born, clean water and bread;
a shelter, a space, a safe place for growing,
for everyone born, a star overhead.

And God will delight when we are creators
of justice and joy, compassion and peace:
yes God will delight when we are creators
of justice, justice and joy.

THURSDAY March 9

Reading: *Genesis*

When the water in the skin was gone, [Hagar] cast the child under one of the bushes. Then she went and sat down opposite him a good way off, about the distance of a bowshot; for she said, “Do not let me look on the death of the child.” And as she sat opposite him, she lifted up her voice and wept. And God heard the voice of the boy; and the angel of God called to Hagar from heaven, and said to her, “What troubles you, Hagar? Do not be afraid; for God has heard the voice of the boy where he is. Come, lift up the boy and hold him fast with your hand, for I will make a great nation of him.” Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. She went, and filled the skin with water, and gave the boy a drink. – Genesis 21:15-21

After the birth of Isaac, Sarah is insistent that Hagar her slave, and Ishmael, the son of Abraham, be sent away. In the wilderness, Hagar soon runs out of water and sits down to wait for death. But God comes.

The wilderness in the Bible is the place of testing and danger, but it is also the place where God provides, and God saves.

Too many people in our world live in a wilderness, starved for water, nutritious food and belonging. We are called to be the angel, who comes to proclaim God’s provision, with wells, and shelter and food.

Prayer: *Psalms 30:8–12*

To you, O Lord, I cried, and to the Lord I made supplication:
“What profit is there in my death, if I go down to the Pit?
Will the dust praise you? Will it tell of your faithfulness?
Hear, O Lord, and be gracious to me!
O Lord, be my helper!”

You have turned my mourning into dancing;
You have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy,
So that my soul may praise you and not be silent.
O Lord my God, I will give thanks to you forever.

FRIDAY March 10

Reading: *Matthew 25:36-41*

‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’
– Matthew 25:37-39

Try today to take the time to read this parable of Jesus. It is one of the most compelling and challenging stories in the Bible. The nations of the world are gathered before Jesus, and they are judged by how they have treated the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick and those in prison.

There is both a collective and an individual responsibility here. Jesus is teaching that when we welcome the stranger, when we give our bread to the hungry, we welcome Him.

There is a deep longing for justice in the heart of God that reverberates not only in this parable, but throughout the biblical story. Justice begins when we bless the stranger by welcoming him in.

When St. Benedict wrote his community’s Rule, he included this provision for radical hospitality:

All guests who present themselves
are to be welcomed as Christ,
for he himself will say:
“I was a stranger and you welcomed me.”

Reflection

Reflect on how hospitality is practiced in our nation, by your church and in your own life in your prayer today.

And the King will answer them, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.' – Matthew 25:40

SATURDAY March 11

Reading: *Psalm 146*

This psalm begins with a question: in whom will you place your faith?

Will you trust in mortals? "When their breath departs, they return to the earth; on that very day their plans perish," says the psalmist.

Or will you choose to trust God? The psalm then tells us who this God is and what this God does. "This is the God who sustains the world, who cares for the vulnerable and who makes the world a liveable place,"⁴ says Walter Brueggemann.

Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the Lord their God,
who made heaven and earth,
the sea, and all that is in them;
who keeps faith forever;
who executes justice for the oppressed;
who gives food to the hungry.
The Lord sets the prisoners free;
the Lord opens the eyes of the blind.
The Lord lifts up those who are bowed down;
the Lord loves the righteous.
The Lord watches over the strangers;
he upholds the orphan and the widow,
but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin. (vs. 5-9)

Pray today for all those who work to make the world a liveable place, including PWRDF and their partners around the world.

Stories from PWRDF

Irrigation Solution

Even after you've learned new farming techniques, it's hard to grow enough food to feed and support your family without enough water to help the crops grow. This was the problem facing Irma Gonon and her family in Willy Wood, Guatemala.

Irma had already received training in sustainable agriculture through PWRDF partner Madre Tierra. She grows green beans and other produce to feed her family of seven. Any extra food she grows, she sells to support the family. But their community's water supplies have been increasingly usurped by agribusinesses in the area, leading wells to run dry in the summer and crops to underperform or fail because of a lack of water.

Madre Tierra is a movement of Guatemalan Indigenous women that emerged in 1986 when they became refugees in Mexico. During that time and after their return to their homeland, Madre Tierra trained its members in agriculture and leadership skills and negotiated with the government to help reintegrate returned refugees into the region and supported their land claims and resettlement needs after their return. PWRDF has partnered with Madre Tierra since 1997.

Madre Tierra has installed water tanks and hoses at the homes of the Gonons and 19 other families in Willy Wood to allow them to gather and store water. They use this water during the dry season to run a drip irrigation system that releases small amounts of water throughout their fields as well as for use at home, instead of collecting water in buckets from water wells.

MONDAY March 13

And since the famine had spread over all the land, Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe in the land of Egypt. Moreover, all the world came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain, because the famine became severe throughout the world. – Genesis 41:56-57

Remember the story of Joseph, the son of Jacob, whose sons become the 12 tribes of Israel – how Joseph's brothers stole his colourful coat and sold him into slavery? Joseph ends up in Egypt, where his gift for interpreting dreams comes to the attention of Pharaoh. Joseph tells Pharaoh his dreams foretell a great famine and is then put in charge of the food supply.

During the harvest years, Joseph gathers and stores grain into Egyptian cities. When famine comes, Joseph sells it back to the people – the first time in the biblical story when food is exchanged for money. When people run short of money, Joseph takes livestock. When the livestock is gone, he takes land. And when the land is gone, he takes people as slaves.

Joseph exploits what Walter Brueggemann calls “the myth of scarcity”⁵ to enrich Pharaoh. In fact, there is more than enough food in Egypt – but by only if you can pay. In the economic pyramid, wealth and power move upward, into the hands of the privileged few.

Reflect on the myth of scarcity. Do you think it continues to operate in our world?

Song or Prayer: *Hymn by Herman G. Steumpfle*

O God, your justice towers above our human plane,
while nation vies with nation in restless search of gain.
Where lust for wealth corrupts us, God, turn our hearts again.
Let justice roll like waters, a mighty, cleansing stream!

O God, your eye, unsleeping, beholds inequity,
while we, replete with riches, grow blind to poverty.
Correct our darkened vision until the truth we see.
Let justice roll like waters, a mighty, cleansing stream.

O God, your heart is breaking where wretched millions lie,
where people wander homeless and famished children die.
Renew in us compassion and teach our hearts to cry:
Let justice roll like waters, a mighty, cleansing stream!

TUESDAY March 14

God said, “See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food.” – Genesis 1:29

Food security involves working to make sure people have access to enough nutritious food. Related is food sovereignty, which refers to the right of all people to culturally appropriate and nutritious food, produced in an ecologically sound and sustainable way. PWRDF supports communities to achieve food security and sovereignty.

Food security, even in times of famine, can increase when people are given the tools, the skill and the knowledge to produce their own food. God has provided in such seed-bearing plants as amaranth, tepary beans and some corn, varieties that can thrive in drought conditions.

Stories from PWRDF

Drought Resistant

In 2009, PWRDF responded to famine in Kenya, living through one of the worst droughts in decades, by partnering with the famine mitigation program of Christian Community Services of Mount Kenya Region. “Nobody can make it rain, but what communities could do in drought stricken areas was learn to grow food in new ways.” Monica was part of a 40 member women’s group learning about water scarce agriculture techniques, cooking different vegetables and drying them for storage. Villagers in Tigithi, calling themselves “enemies of hunger,” experimented with new dry-land farming techniques to grow maize and amaranth, using home fertilizers and grey water and trying out seeds that mature in two months.”

Prayer: *Psalm 126:4-6*

Pray today with the farmers in drought prone areas of the world with these words:

Restore our fortunes, O Lord,
Like the watercourses in the Negeb.
May those who sow in tears
reap with shouts of joy.
Those who go out weeping,
bearing the seed for sowing,
shall come home with shouts of joy,
carrying their sheaves.

WEDNESDAY March 15

Reading: *Exodus 1:8-2:10*

“When you act as midwives to the Hebrew women, and see them on the birthstool, if it is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, she shall live.” But the midwives feared God; they did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but they let the boys live. – Exodus 1:6-7

When Pharaoh orders genocide, women resist. Theirs is a brave, subversive life-giving faith in the face of the death-dealing empire of Pharaoh who is threatened by the vigour of the Hebrew slaves.

Midwives defy Pharaoh’s order, protecting infant boys from being drowned in the Nile. When Moses is born, his mother places him in a reed basket on the Nile, where he drifts into the hands of Pharaoh’s daughter. She also defies her father by adopting the child she names Moses, which means “I drew him out of the water.” Moses’ sister, who watches, offers to find a Hebrew nurse for the baby – his own mother, and Pharaoh’s daughter provides wages until the child is old enough to live in the palace.

Prayer: *Psalm 109:39-43*

Today, pray for midwives and all those who work for the well being of women and children.

When they are diminished and brought low
Through oppression, trouble, and sorrow,
He pours contempt on princes
And makes them wander in trackless wastes;
But he raises up the needy out of distress,
And makes their families like flocks.
The upright see it and are glad;
And all wickedness stops its mouth.
Let those who are wise give heed to these things,
And consider the steadfast love of the Lord.

THURSDAY March 16

Reading: Exodus

When she could hide him no longer, she got a papyrus basket for him, and plastered it with bitumen and pitch; she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the river. His sister stood at a distance to see what would happen to him. – Exodus 2:3-4

Here is another story of a child of the river, when Moses was saved when his mother floated him on the Nile in a reed basket

Stories from PWRDF A baby named River

Bantiar is a remote village on the banks of the river Pechakola in Bangladesh. Shahana and her husband Jahangir, a poor farmer, live there. PWRDF funded a Daighor, a centre for Traditional Birth Attendants, Dais, in the village, where women and girls receive care.

In October 2014, Shahana began to have contractions and two of the Dais went to see her. It was the time of the Eid-ul-Azha, a Muslim festival.

Shahana was having convulsions; she needed to be taken to hospital. The problem was there were no men who could drive the bicycle ambulance to the riverbank, where the boat ambulance docks. The men were in Dhaka selling cows for the festival.

The Dais could not wait. They took Shahana on the bicycle ambulance and three Dais pushed it up to the riverbank with the help of other neighbouring women. One of the older men from the village boarded with them to drive the boat.

The Dais brought their kits along, knowing that the river crossing was two hours. Shahana's baby was born while they

were still on the water, a beautiful girl her mother named Nodi, which means "River".

Shahana no longer needed to be in hospital; she was doing well and feeling hungry, so the Dais decided to return to Bantiar, stopping near a village. The Dais called for help from the village women, asking for clean clothes for the baby and warm rice for Shahana.

These are all very poor families, most of them landless, victims of river erosion. Yet this was a happy day for them because a baby was born safely on the boat ambulance. Shahana and the Dais came back safely to Bantiar.

When making ethical decisions, we need to ask ourselves, "Is this cultural action, this communal decision, this political policy or ecological practice, this artistic product or technological development life-giving or not? Is it the kind of thing that bears good fruit in our lives? Would it make sense to a woman about to bring vulnerable new life into the world?"⁶

Reflection

Here for reflection today, is how Wendell Berry poses the question:

Ask yourself: Will this satisfy
A woman satisfied to bear a child?
Will this disturb the sleep
Of a woman near to giving birth?⁷

FRIDAY March 17

Reading: *Exodus 3:1–15*

Then the Lord said, “I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their suffering, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey.”
– Exodus 3:7,8a

Moses is far from Egypt when he encounters a bush burning yet not consumed. “I must turn aside and look,” he says. And when God sees him turn, God speaks out of the bush, calling his name.

“Here I am,” says Moses, and the voice of God commands him to remove his sandals because he is standing on holy ground.

God has spoken out of the depths of God’s compassion, having heard the cries of the Hebrew slaves, building storage out of bricks for Pharaoh’s grain. “Indeed,” says God, “I know their sufferings,” and opens a way through Moses to lead the people out of slavery into freedom.

To have compassion means to enter into the suffering of others. We are on holy ground when we turn aside and look, and when we respond with compassion. It can be a moment of transformation that leads to freedom.

Who is God calling you to suffer with today?

Song or Prayer: *CP 585; Bayly*

Lord, whose love through humble service bore the weight of human need,
who upon the cross, forsaken, offered mercy’s perfect deed:
we, your servants, bring the worship not of voice alone, but heart,
consecrating to your purpose every gift that you impart.

Still your children wander homeless; still the hungry cry for bread;
still the captives long for freedom; still in grief we mourn our dead.
As, O Lord, your deep compassion healed the sick and freed the soul,
use the love your Spirit kindles still to save and make us whole.

As we worship, grant us vision, till your love’s revealing light
in its height and depth and greatness dawns upon our quickened sight,
making known the needs and burdens your compassion bids us bear,
stirring us to tireless striving your abundant life to share.

SATURDAY March 18

Reading: *Exodus 13:17–22*

The Lord went in front of them in a pillar of cloud by day, to lead them along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light, so that they might travel by day and by night. – Exodus 13:21

When God leads Israel out of slavery in Egypt and into the wilderness, he takes them the long way ‘round. It is a forty-year journey, in which Israel learns how to be God’s people, to depend on God’s provision and is given Torah, the law, which is to shape their lives in the Promised Land.

Their pilgrimage is guided by God’s presence as cloud by day, and fire by night. Think about the cloud, imagine walking in it. It is only possible to take one step at a time. It is not possible to see very far ahead, to see the way in which you are being led. Trust is required as you take the steps as they become clear.

Is this a helpful way to think about the life of faith? We know the general direction that God has called us to go – but the way there is revealed one step at a time.

If this is helpful for you, perhaps consider where God is leading you. What is the next step?

Song or Prayer: *Hymn by John Henry Newman*

Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom, lead thou me on;
the night is dark, and I am far from home; lead thou me on.
Keep thou my feet; I do not ask to see
the distant scene; one step enough for me.

I was not ever thus, nor prayed that thou shouldst lead me on;
I loved to choose and see my path; but now lead thou me on.
I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,
pride ruled my will: remember not past years.

So long thy power hath blest me, sure it still will lead me on,
o’er moor and fen, o’er crag and torrent, till the night is gone,
and with the morn those angel faces smile,
which I have loved long since, and lost awhile.

MONDAY March 20

Reading: *Exodus 16*

This week our reading and reflection will be on Exodus 16. Try to read the whole chapter if you can during this week.

The whole congregation of the Israelites complained against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the fleshpots and ate our fill of bread; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger.”

– Exodus 16:2-3

As Moses and Aaron soon learned, you can take the people out of Egypt, but it’s much harder to take Egypt out of the people. Can you blame them? Their anxiety in the wilderness is understandable, given that they had been slaves for 400 years.

In Egypt, the Israelites probably did eat their fill of bread. Notice though, that they remember sitting beside the fleshpots – likely tending the stew for their taskmasters. The food of the poor was grain, consumed as “gruel and goats, bread and beer.”⁸

It’s a striking depiction of an industrialized food economy where lower quality food is eaten by the poor while the wealthy eat well. Food pantries/food banks give away food to poor people. Often this includes things such as boxed pasta, crackers and cookies with little nutritional value. Harder to come by are the fresh fruits and vegetables, meat and dairy people long for.

Food insecurity causes anxiety: What will I eat today? Will there be enough tomorrow? For today, try to imagine what it must have felt like to be in a wilderness of hunger.

Guide me, O my great Jehovah,
pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but thou art mighty;
hold me with thy powerful hand.
Bread of heaven, bread of heaven,
feed me till I want no more,
feed me till I want no more.

TUESDAY March 21

Then the Lord said to Moses, “I am going to rain bread from heaven for you, and each day the people shall go out and gather enough for that day. In that way I will test them, whether they will follow my instruction or not.” – Exodus 16:4

God has led Israel into the wilderness so that they can learn how to be God’s people, chosen to show the world what it looks like when a community lives according to God’s purposes.

In the wilderness Israel learns about wise eating when God rains down manna from heaven — taking only what they need, and trusting God to provide out of the abundance of creation their daily bread. “Morning by morning they gathered it, as much as each needed; but when the sun grew hot, it melted.” (v.21)

Manna from heaven is God’s alternative to the scarcity system of Egypt. God’s economy is rooted in both the abundance of creation and the principle of taking only what you need.

How can we live more deeply rooted in the wisdom of the wilderness — that God has provided in creation enough for everyone? Can we practice wise eating, taking only what we need so that everyone will have enough?

Reflect today on what wise eating means for you. Is this something you might like to explore further as part of your Lenten fast?

Song or Prayer: *Thomas O. Chisolm*

Great is thy faithfulness, great is thy faithfulness!
Morning by morning new mercies I see.
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided,
Great is thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.

Summer and winter and springtime and harvest,
Sun, moon and stars in their courses above
Join with all nature in manifold witness
To thy great faithfulness, mercy and love.

WEDNESDAY March 22

Israelites ate manna forty years, until they came to a habitable land; they ate manna, until they came to the border of the land of Canaan. An omer is a tenth of an ephah. – Exodus 16:35

We know exactly how much food an Israelite in the wilderness those 40 years required every day to sustain life and health: an omer. It is a detail that Ellen Davis points out, that tells us that eating with restraint is an important aspect of faithfulness in our consumption.

Moses also commanded: “Take a jar, and put an omer of manna in it, and place it before the Lord, to be kept throughout your generations.” (Exodus 16:33) Perhaps we can take from this that eating with restraint was to be a principle of consumption for Israel not only in the wilderness, but also when they came into the land.⁹

What does eating with restraint for ourselves and for future generations mean for us in a culture of over-consumption? It may mean:

- Choosing to eat less food so that we can share with others
- Eating food that has been produced in a way that does not damage the soil
- Buying fair trade foods so that food producers in developing countries are fairly paid

What is the omer of manna you would like to place before the Lord in this season of Lent?

Song or Prayer: *For the Fruit of All Creation, CP 259:2, Green*

In the just reward of labour, God’s will is done.
In the help we give our neighbour, God’s will is done.
In our worldwide task of caring
For the hungry and despairing,
In the harvests we are sharing,
God’s will is done.

THURSDAY March 23

On the sixth day they gathered twice as much food, two omers apiece. When all the leaders of the congregation came and told Moses, he said to them, “This is what the Lord has commanded: ‘Tomorrow is a day of solemn rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord; bake what you want to bake and boil what you want to boil, and all that is left over put aside to be kept until morning’.” – Exodus 16:24

Even though Moses told the people they were not to go out to gather on the seventh day, some did. Raised in the economy of Egypt they knew only unceasing work and anxiety. A day of rest was a whole new rhythm of life.

Can you relate?

In the biblical story, Sabbath-keeping is more than a day off. It has an economic dimension; Israel is learning that God can be trusted to provide what they need even if they stop working. Later, when Israel settles down as an agrarian society, sabbath-keeping will be extended to working livestock, and to the land. Israel is commanded to let the fields and the vineyards lie fallow one year in seven so as not to exhaust the land.

Sabbath is meant to be a part of our rhythm of life – a gift of time to cease from our work and rejoice in God’s work. It is time to remember that God provides everything we need in a good and abundant creation; we don’t have to work all the time to have enough. It is time to experience a little of the completeness and wholeness that is God’s peace, God’s shalom.

Perhaps part of your Lenten fast might be from unceasing busy-ness.

Reflection: *Psalm 92:1–4*

It is good to give thanks to the Lord,
To sing praises to your name, O Most High;
To declare your steadfast love in the morning,
And your faithfulness by night,
To the music of the lute and the harp,
To the melody of the lyre.
For you, O Lord, have made me glad by your work;
At the works of your hands I sing for joy.

FRIDAY March 24

It is evening, and Jesus is on the other side of the Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias. The body of water at the heart of Israel has been renamed, John notes, for the Emperor of Rome. So we are in the land of scarcity, where Rome controls the food supply. Jesus has been teaching and healing and a large crowd follows him. “Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?” Jesus asks his disciples.

There is no way this band of poor followers could buy bread for 5000 people. The problem of the hunger of the crowd will not be solved by commerce with the empire on the shores of the Sea of Tiberias.

Jesus tells the disciples to seat the people in the grass and takes the five barley loaves and two fish a small boy is willing to give. It is a child’s faith that becomes exemplary here; a child, who gives what he has, and in the hands of Jesus it is enough, it is more than enough. It is an abundance.

That is where we start when faced by overwhelming hunger. It is our willingness to share what we have that makes our gift holy. We give for the sake of love; the multiplication is God’s work.

Song or Prayer: *Hymn by Thomas Porter*

Let us be bread, blessed by the Lord,
Broken and shared, life for the world.
Let us be wine, love freely poured,
Let us be one in the Lord.

SATURDAY March 25

Psalm 23 is a song of the wilderness, and when it speaks of God's goodness and mercy, the language would have reminded Israel of the exodus journey. But this is also a song sung by an individual who expresses deep trust in a lifelong, intimate relationship with God.

Unfortunately this psalm is often associated with funerals. Perhaps we can reclaim it as a song that describes a life of trusting in God to provide, give rest, lead, restore, and shepherd in the dark valleys. What other actions of God do you hear the psalmist recalling here? Do any of these resonate with your experience of the life of faith?

Song or Prayer: Psalm 23

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.
He makes me lie down in green pastures;
He leads me beside still waters; He restores my soul.
He leads me in right paths for his name's sake.
Even though I walk through the darkest valley,
I fear no evil; for you are with me;
Your rod and your staff — they comfort me.
You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies;
You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life,
And I shall dwell in the house of the Lord my whole life long.

Stories from PWRDF

Sharing an abundance

Ngendakumana Adèle is the head of one of 600 families in the Diocese of Gitega, Burundi who have been given starter seed and animals and learned farming techniques to better provide for their families. "We got support and can produce food now. We are cultivating two fields, which produce enough for our family and extra to sell for income," she says. "We can send our children to school and we have enough food to eat."

Ngendakumana and her husband François grew up as Burundian refugees in Tanzania, but returned to their homeland after the civil war ended a few years ago. They now live in the village of Gasunu, where PWRDF and the Diocese of Gitega are working with vulnerable families to improve their levels of nutrition and income.

"We provide seeds so they can grow beans, soya, sweet potato, maize, tomatoes and more," says François Ndibwami, a development worker with the Diocese. "We also provide a goat to the families and teach them to make organic fertilizer from its dung. The families need the fertilizer because climate change has had a large impact on the farmers."

The Diocese is helping the families to think outside the box in what they grow. "We give them sweet potato seeds because they are resistant to the dry season. We are also helping them to grow mushrooms, which provide good protein and can be grown without needing inputs, since they grow on the leftover stalks and stems of other crops."

Whenever a family's goat has a kid, or their plants produce offshoots, the family gives the new resource to a neighbour. This helps to build the whole community together- returned refugees, displaced people, and the long-term residents of the villages. Thanks to this sharing program, over 3000 families will benefit from this initiative over five years.

Week Four: Fourth Sunday in Lent

MONDAY March 27

Reading: *Leviticus 19*

You shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the Lord.
– Leviticus 19:18b

Torah, the law given to Israel, is contained in the first five books of the bible. The 10 commandments, given to Israel at Mount Sinai, are foundational, and in this passage from Leviticus they are restated. But here we see how the law develops as the code that defines what holiness looks like in daily life.

Holiness for Israel meant due reverence and care in worship. It meant not stripping the vines bare, so that there would be fruit for the poor to glean. It meant using fair measure in commerce, and paying a labourer at the end of a workday. It meant tending and keeping the integrity of creation; not cross-breeding animals or sowing two kinds of seed in a field, and leaving young fruit trees to mature before taking the harvest. Neighbourliness included safeguarding young women, deferring to the aged, treating the alien as you would a citizen, and loving your neighbour as yourself.

Holiness, then, is near; it exists in the decisions we make every day about how to live.

Prayer: Deuteronomy 30:11-14 (RSV translation):

For this commandment, which I command you this day
is not too hard for you, neither is it far off.
It is not in heaven, that you should say,
‘Who will go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us,
that we may hear it and do it?’

Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say,
‘Who will go over the sea for us, and bring it to us,
that we may hear it and do it?’
But the word is very near you;
it is in your mouth and in your heart,
so that you can do it.

TUESDAY March 28

Reading: *1 Kings 17:9–18:6*

Elijah said to [the widow of Zarephath]: “Do not be afraid; go and do as you have said; but first, make me a little cake of [meal] and bring it to me, and afterwards make something for yourself and your son. For thus says the Lord the God of Israel: The jar of meal will not be emptied and the jug of oil will not fail until the day that the Lord sends rain on the earth.” – 1 Kings 17:13–14

Elijah the prophet is for all intents and purposes a refugee, fleeing tyranny in Israel under King Ahab and his wife, Jezebel. Depressed, hungry in the midst of famine, and fleeing for his life, Elijah is told by God to seek out a widow beyond Israel’s borders; she will feed him. When he comes to Zarephath, he finds the widow and her son by the city gates, but they are starving too, about to eat their last meal. “Bring me a morsel of bread,” says Elijah.

What would you have done, in her place? What would any of us do if we were down to our last 10 dollars, our last bit of meal, and a stranger asked us to feed him. If you’ve so little left that there is not even enough for you, will you cling to it, hold it all the more tightly, or if asked, would you feed another person?

The Bible argues all the way through to make the cake for Elijah. That is what the widow did; and God kept the promise. She was a neighbour to Elijah, and he became a neighbour to her, even restoring her child to life. Together, with God’s help, they came through the famine.

Prayer: Psalm 68

Today, pray for the homeless and the world’s refugees who need us to act with radical hospitality. Here are some words from Psalm 68 to begin your prayer:

Father of orphans and protector of widows
Is God in his holy habitation?

God gives the desolate a home to live in;
He leads out the prisoners to prosperity,
But the rebellious live in a parched land. (vs. 5–6)

Stories from PWRDF

Rebuilding community in the wake of disaster

In 2015, Naba Gurung, PWRDF’s coordinator for humanitarian relief, reported from Nepal where a coalition of churches and aid agencies are engaged in relief, development and advocacy work.

“In the city, because of the second quake, people were still sleeping outside,” said Gurung. “They said they had just started sleeping inside again and then the second quake drove them back to sleeping in tents.”

Immediately after the devastating April 25 earthquake, PWRDF began to support the Lutheran World Federation in providing ready-to-eat meals in 16 camps throughout the Kathmandu Valley. Within a few days, the local markets were able to re-open so the focus of relief work moved into the more remote villages.

In the remote village of Moktan-Tole, one resident, an 8 year-old girl, was killed when her home collapsed. Livestock in the village were also killed. Blankets, tarpaulins, hygiene kits, buckets and mugs, and basic food: rice, lentils, cooking oil and salt were immediately provided. The villages soon began to plant corn, rice and millet but the time until harvest was several months away; they would need the emergency food aid until then.

Counsellors visited the village, talking with the survivors about their experience and helping to rebuild their community by working together. The people responded by building a long shelter that has been divided to provide space for each of the 12 families in the village to live. The alliance was able to provide these farmers, masons and carpenters the supplies they needed to rebuild their homes, their livelihoods and their lives.

WEDNESDAY March 29

Reading: *Ruth 2* (or the whole story if you have time)

And Ruth the Moabite said to Naomi, “Let me go to the field and glean among the ears of grain, behind someone in whose sight I may find favour.” She said to her, “Go, my daughter.” *Ruth 2:2*

Naomi and Ruth are destitute widows who have come to live in Naomi’s home in Bethlehem (which means “house of bread”). Ruth the Moabite is a stranger in Israel who refuses to abandon her mother-in-law.

The law of Israel required that the edges of a field be left for the poor to glean. It was one of the ways in which Israel was required to secure the food supply for all. When Ruth goes out to the fields belonging to Boaz to gather barley, he welcomes her, offers her protection, and gives her food and drink. Ruth and Boaz are eventually married. Their son, Obed, becomes Naomi’s next-of-kin. Matthew will list Ruth in his genealogy as one of the grandmothers of Jesus of Nazareth. God is at work in the lives of these ordinary people to bring salvation.

Prayer: *Psalms 119:30–32*

Ruth chose to be faithful to Naomi, even when it appeared that doing so would lessen her chances of remarriage. Here are some verses from Psalm 119 for praying today:

I have chosen the way of faithfulness;
I set your ordinances before me.
I cling to your decrees, O Lord;
let me not be put to shame.
I run the way of your commandments,
for you enlarge my understanding.

THURSDAY March 30

Reading: *Amos 8:1–9*

“We will make the ephah small and the shekel great, and practice deceit with fair balances, buying the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of sandals, and selling the sweepings of the wheat.”
—*Amos 8:5b-6*

Amos the prophet was a farmer, sent by God into the northern kingdom of Israel to speak judgment in a time of relative prosperity. His oracles condemn the practices of the ruling classes who “trample the needy” with unjust economic practices. Shopkeepers are tampering with weights and measures and selling wheat with the chaff ground into it.

Unfair economic practices will bring judgment, says Amos. Creation itself revolts when human beings act unjustly in their dealings with one another. To choose to be unjust is nonsensical and absurd; like trying to plow the sea, says Amos. (6:14).

In a world of excessive consumption and appalling economic inequity, we who enjoy prosperity at the expense of the poor are called to repentance.

Prayer: *Amos 5:23–24*

A world restored to justice is music to God’s ears. For today as you pray, hear God speaking as Amos did:

Take away from me the noise of your songs;
I will not listen to the melody of your harps.
But let justice roll down like waters,
And righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

FRIDAY March 31

Reading: Luke 10: 25–37

Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he said, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” He said to him, “What is written in the law? What do you read there?” He answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbour as yourself.” And he said to him, “You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live.” But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbour?” Luke 10:25–28

Jesus answers the question with the parable of the Good Samaritan. A man travelling the Jericho road is robbed, beaten, and left for dead. Two Israelites, a Levite and a priest, pass by. Can you identify with the Levite and the priest? What caused them to pass by? Was it fear? Or was it something else?

A Samaritan stops and provides generous care. This would have shocked Jesus’ listeners, because Samaria and Israel were enemies.

How does the parable answer the question: Who is my neighbour?

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., in his speech, “Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break the Silence” at Riverside Church in New York City in 1967, named the “giant triplets” of racism, militarism and materialism that continue to plague our world today. “On the one hand we are called to play the good Samaritan on life’s roadside; but that will be only an initial act,” says King. “One day we must come to see that the whole Jericho road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed as they make their journey on life’s highway. True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it is not haphazard and superficial. It comes to see that an edifice which produces beggars needs restructuring.”

SATURDAY April 1

Reading: *Isaiah 65:17–25*

I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and delight in my people; no more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress.

No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old person who does not live out a lifetime; for one who dies at a hundred years will be considered a youth, and one who falls short of a hundred will be considered accursed.

They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit.

They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat;

for like the days of a tree shall the days of my people be, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hands.

They shall not labour in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be offspring blessed by the Lord – and their descendants as well.

Before they call I will answer, while they are yet speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb shall feed together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox;

but the serpent—its food shall be dust!

They shall not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain, says the Lord.

This song of Isaiah describes the dream of God — a world restored. It is given to Israel through the prophet at a time of desolation, when after exile, the community faces the enormous task of rebuilding.

It is nothing less than “a new heaven and a new earth.” It is a world where infant mortality is zero, where people live long healthy lives, a vision of economic contentment where people have homes to live in and vineyards. There is freedom from futility, and violence; no more child soldiers. Creation is restored to original peace, which Isaiah described as harmonious relationships between creaturely enemies like the wolf and the lamb. This is the vision of God’s shalom: completeness, wholeness, welfare, peace.

To hold this vision in our hearts, a world where none hurt or destroy and where no cry of distress is heard in the land, where God's presence is near — this is a vision to hold in our hearts, to pray and to work for.

Stories from PWRDF

Getting to Zero

In 2012, PWRDF partner the Diocese of Bujumbura in Burundi and the Government of Canada conducted a survey into maternal, newborn and child health work in the Diocese. 29 rural villages were surveyed and the findings revealed that a staggering 12 percent of babies died during childbirth. A program was developed to train and equip “Safe Motherhood Promoters” to educate women about family planning, nutrition and to encourage them to seek medical care during pregnancy and birth.

During a six-month period in 2015, the infant mortality rate in the region dropped to zero percent. 1536 women were pregnant and 597 of those women gave birth. Almost all of the births took place in a medical facility. Over 9000 people received education in feeding malnourished children and ninety-one percent of the malnourished children in the program recovered. The educators also encouraged the mothers to join agricultural associations in their villages to support each other in growing food for their families.

MONDAY April 3

Reading: *Luke 4:14–30*

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
Because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
And to let the oppressed go free,
And to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour. – Luke 4:18-19

When Jesus stands in the synagogue in his hometown of Nazareth, he proclaims good news to the poor, release for captives, freedom for the oppressed. He is reading from Isaiah, restating God's promise of a world restored to economic balance. Jesus announces that he is Messiah, anointed by the Holy Spirit in the waters of baptism to declare the year of the Lord's favour.

When Jesus invokes the year of the Lord's favour, his hometown listeners would hear 'jubilee.' In chapter 25 of Leviticus, Israel was commanded to keep every fiftieth year as a “sabbath of Sabbaths”. In this year land previously sold for debt relief was returned to the original owners; slaves were freed; and it was a year in which no cultivation of the land took place. The people lived off what the land produced without cultivation. What Jesus leaves off when he reads Isaiah is a reference to vengeance; Jesus came not to declare retribution but redistribution of wealth, and freedom from oppression for creation and community.

The story ends with confrontation: when Jesus makes it clear that this proclamation is not only for Israel but for the world, the crowd turns on him, and attempts to throw him off a cliff. They wanted a hometown hero; they were not prepared to receive the Son of God.

Jesus compels us to look beyond our own interests, the salvation of our own community, to see God acting with care and concern for the world.

Song or Prayer: *CP 442; Wren/Bortniansky*

Great God, your love has called us here
As we, by love, for love were made,
Your living likeness still we bear,
Though marred, dishonoured, disobeyed.
We come, with all our heart and mind,
Your call to hear, your love to find.

TUESDAY April 4

Reading: *Luke 5:1–11*

Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down my nets. When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break.
– Luke 5:5

Jesus is calling people to follow him. Peter and the sons of Zebedee, James and John, have been fishing all night but they catch nothing. Jesus tells Peter to go out a bit further and to let down their nets. The catch is so abundant Peter must call for help to haul it in.

This abundant catch was for Peter a sign that God had come to re-order the world. Under the oppression of Rome, Peter's catches would have been counted; he would have been paid little. An abundant catch meant bread for his family. But this miracle was a sign that the Lord of creation was before him. Peter fell at Jesus' feet. "Do not be afraid," says Jesus "from now on you will be catching people." Peter got up and followed him.

Do the actions in this passage resonate in your life? Have you been called to go further out, to drop your nets, to recognize the Lord of creation, to follow in a new direction?

Song or Prayer: *CP 430; Bell*

Will you come and follow me if I but call your name?
Will you go where you don't know and never be the same,
Will you let my love be shown, will you let my name be known,
Will you let my life be grown in you and you in me?

Lord your summons echoes true when you but call my name.
Let me turn and follow you and never be the same.
In your company I'll go where your love and footsteps show,
Thus I'll move and live and grow in you and you in me.

WEDNESDAY April 5

Reading: *Luke 11:1–13*

He said to them, ‘When you pray, say’:
Father, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come.
Give us each day our daily bread.
And forgive us our sins
For we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us.
And do not bring us to the time of trial. –Luke 11:2-4

The disciples ask Jesus to teach them to pray, and he gives them an outline for communal prayer. In the light of our concern for food security, consider these petitions in terms of economic justice: Jesus teaches us to call God the head of the household that is all creation who acts with compassion and generous care toward God’s children. We are called to pray for God’s kingdom to come – that creation be fully restored to God’s purposes. We are to pray as Moses taught Israel in the wilderness gathering manna, and as Elijah taught the widow of Zarephath, for enough bread for today. Jesus teaches us to pray that this be a year acceptable to the Lord where jubilee is enacted in the forgiveness of debt.

Jesus goes on in his teaching to encourage the disciples to pray in order to enter into a deeper relationship with God, to pray in order to know God, to ask, seek, knock until the door is opened. At the end of his teaching, Jesus reassures his disciples that God’s love surpasses that of any human parent, and God will give to them the Holy Spirit if they ask.

What would you like to ask God for today? How can you see this prayer shaping the life of a community?

Song or Prayer: *CP 638; Latin 9thC; Mechlin plainsong*

O Holy Spirit, by whose breath life rises vibrant out of death,
Come to create, renew, inspire, come, kindle in our hearts your fire.
You are the seeker’s sure resource of burning love the living source,
Protector in the midst of strife, the giver and the Lord of life.
In you God’s energy is shown; to us your varied gifts made known.
Teach us to speak; teach us to hear; yours is the tongue and yours the ear.
Flood our dull senses with your light; in mutual love our hearts unite.
Your power the whole creation fills; confirm our weak, uncertain wills.
From inner strife grant us release, turn nations to the ways of peace.
To fuller life your people bring, that as one body we may sing:
Praise to the Father, Christ his Word, and to the Spirit:
God the Lord.

THURSDAY April 6

Reading: *Luke 12:13–31*

Then he told them a parable: The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, ‘What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?’ – Luke 12:16–17

As you read this passage from Luke, you will encounter two very different approaches to life. On the one hand there is the rich man, who decides to build bigger barns to store his abundant grain. He plans for future ease, not for death. But “his life is required of him” just as he settles in to “eat, drink, and be merry”. Jesus comments: “So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.”

This parable echoes the ancient story of Pharaoh hoarding wealth. In a culture driven by the myth of scarcity, we learn that it is virtuous to “store up treasure for ourselves.” It is difficult to contemplate letting go of the security we have in this way of living.

Jesus called his followers to a different way of life. Does this passage challenge you to think in a new way about your possessions?

Song or Prayer: *CP 466; Green*

How clear is our vocation, Lord,
When once we heed your call:
To live according to your word,
And daily learn, refreshed, restored,
That you are Lord of all,
And will not let us fall.

In what you give us, Lord, to do,
Together or alone,
In old routines or ventures new,
May we not cease to look to you,
The cross you hung upon,
All you endeavoured done.

FRIDAY April 7

He said to his disciples, “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat, or about your body, what you will wear. Do not be afraid, little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” Luke 12:22, 32-34

Here is the alternative way of life that Jesus models for his disciples. It is a life rooted in the wisdom of creation, where ravens are fed and lilies are decked in glory. It is a life consumed not by worry, anxiety, and concern for storing up treasure on earth, but in the trust that imagines selling our possessions in order to give generously to the poor. It asks us to practice Jubilee in our own households, trusting in God’s provision, just as Israel learned to do as eaters of manna in the wilderness.

Jesus is teaching his followers to travel light in this life; to be freed up from obsessive worry about “what we will eat and what we will wear” in order to have the energy and imagination for the work of feeding the hungry, enacting justice for the landless, and forgiving one another.

For those of us who have means, this is a call to redistribution. Those who are poor, and the groaning creation, wait for us, the children of God to be revealed. (See Romans 8)

Reflection: *Psalms 113*

Praise the Lord!
Praise, O servants of the Lord; praise the name of the Lord.
Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time on and forevermore.
From the rising of the sun to its setting the name of the Lord is to be praised.

The Lord is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens.
Who is like the Lord our God, who is seated on high,
who looks far down on the heavens and the earth?
He raises the poor from the dust, and lifts the needy from the ash
heap,
to make them sit with princes, with the princes of his people.
He gives the barren woman a home, making her the joyous mother
of children.
Praise the Lord!

SATURDAY April 8

Reading: Luke 19:1-10

Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much." Then Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost." – Luke 19:8-10

Zacchaeus, a chief tax collector who is very wealthy, climbs a sycamore tree in order to see Jesus when he passes through Jericho. Jesus invites himself over to Zacchaeus' house for dinner and the crowd is scandalized because Jesus is once again eating with tax collectors and sinners.

In the exchange of hospitality, Zacchaeus moves out of his old life of defrauding the poor in order to enrich himself, and into the abundant life of God. This is what Jubilee looks like when it is enacted. In the redistribution of wealth, the poor have good news brought to them, the oppressed go free, and those who forgive debts find themselves forgiven. Salvation comes as the community is restored to abundant living where everyone has enough.

What might the Zacchaeus plan look like in your neighbourhood?

Song or Prayer: *CP 61; Daw*

As we gather at your table, as we listen to your word,
Help us know, O God, your presence; let our hearts and minds be
stirred.

Nourish us with sacred story till we claim it as our own;
Teach us through this holy banquet how to make Love's victory
known.

Turn our worship into witness in the sacrament of life;
send us forth to love and serve you, bringing peace where there is
strife.

Give us, Christ, your great compassion to forgive as you forgave;
may we still behold your image in the world you died to save.

Gracious Spirit, help us summon other guests to share that feast
where triumphant Love will welcome those who had been last and
least.

There no more will envy blind us, nor will pride our peace destroy,
as we join with saints and angels to repeat the sounding joy.

PALM SUNDAY April 9

Tomorrow is Palm Sunday, when we will follow Jesus down the Mount of Olives and enter into Holy Week. We know that Jesus will confront the powers of this world who will try to silence him. Jesus confronts them, not with violence, but as the Prince of Peace, giving up his life in order to bring life to the world. Here for this week, is a story about confrontation:

Stories from PWRDF

The women of Mankayan

In the mountains of Luzon, Philippines, near the community of Mankayan there is a barricade. For over four years, women from the community have kept watch 24/7.

They are there to ensure that no new mining equipment is taken down the road to the mine. They are deeply concerned by the damage that has already been done to their community, their river and their land.

Mother Janet is one of the women on the barricade. In 1999, Janet was working in her garden when the ground started to shake. She thought it was an earthquake. She worried about her children, and ran to her house; she found a large crack in the ground where the earth had opened up.

Her children were fine, but Janet was haunted by what could have been. The earth shake had, in fact, swallowed up the local school; fortunately the children were not inside when the ground opened up.

Elders in the community linked the earth shake with the mine that had opened several years earlier. In the years since it opened, 500 pieces of land subsided. Livestock sickened and died after drinking from the local river; fish were deformed, rotting alive.

Members of the community approached the Cordillera People's Alliance (CPA), a PWRDF partner working in the region. CPA works with communities to help them to organize and resist when confronted by such issues; in Mankayan they taught women, youth and farmers in the area about their rights to their ancestral lands as Indigenous people ensured in the Philippine Indigenous People's Rights Act.

The issues were complex: Janet and others of the Indigenous community wanted the mine shut down because of damage to the river, their rice paddies and the land. The mining families were concerned for their livelihoods. How much mining is acceptable?

CPA and the elders of Mankayan worked to build consensus among the various groups, as mining families came to realize that the mine wasn't sustainable as it was currently being operated. The people of Mankayan called on the mining company to stop its operations and its plans for expansion.

The mining company retaliated, firing 1000 workers, attacking CPA as being anti-mining and anti-development and calling in the military to protect the mine's interests.

The barricade went up in 2008 and, despite being destroyed by the mining company, despite soldiers firing into the air over the heads of the protesting women on the barricade, they continue to defend their community, their land and their rights. Janet and the others are tired from their years of work. How long, O Lord? How long?

MONDAY April 10

Reading: *Luke 19*

As he came near and saw the city, he wept over it, saying, "If you, even you, had only recognized on this day the things that make for peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. Indeed the days will come upon you when your enemies will set up ramparts around you and surround you, and hem you in on every side. They will crush you to the ground, you and your children within you, and they will not leave within you one stone upon another; because you did not recognize the time of your visitation from God." –Luke 19:41–44

Jesus laments as he rides toward Jerusalem on a colt in the Palm Sunday procession. We call it his triumphal entry but for Jesus there is pain, regret and deep sorrow over what will happen within the wall of the city in this week.

The consequences for Jerusalem of not recognizing the time of their "visitation from God" for Luke is the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD. "The implication of what Jesus says here," writes Paula Gooder, "is that the fall of the temple might have been avoided had they been able to recognize who Jesus was and what difference he made in the world."¹⁰

Reflection

This is a week for us to lament with Jesus that we sometimes fail to recognize and take up the things that make for peace. Here, for reflection, some verses from Lamentations (2:12-13):

They cry to their mothers,
"Where is bread and wine?"
as they faint like the wounded
in the streets of the city,

as their life is poured out
on their mother's bosom.

What can I say for you, to what compare you,
O daughter Jerusalem?
To what can I liken you, that I may comfort you,
O virgin daughter Zion?
For vast as the sea is your ruin,
Who can heal you?

TUESDAY April 11

Reading: *Luke 19:28-48*

Then he entered the temple and began to drive out those who were selling things there; and he said, "It is written, 'My house shall be a house of prayer'; but you have made it a den of robbers." Every day he was teaching in the temple. The chief priests, the scribes, and the leaders of the people kept looking for a way to kill him; but they did not find anything they could do, for all the people were spellbound by what they heard. – Luke 19:45–48

Jesus drives those who have made the temple a "cave of bandits" (Jeremiah 7:11), but he does not abandon it. He tries to reclaim it, proclaiming "good news to the poor" in its courts; many gather daily to hear, while the authorities plot to kill him.

We who follow Jesus can expect that bringing good news to the poor will bring us into conflict with the powers that be, that the gospel of justice will be unwelcome as it was for the women of Manyam.

Jesus later tells his disciples to expect this, but says, "I will give you a word and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict." It is not possible to reasonably argue against the justice of God or the care of creation; nevertheless, those who follow the way of the cross can expect to be betrayed and hated, but will not perish. (Luke 21:15-19)

Song or Prayer: *CP 604; Webber*

Your word, O God, a living sword, reveals within each heart
The love of self, the hidden fears, that keep us far apart;
We seek to stand by our own strength but fail and fall alone,
And still we find ourselves afraid to know as we are known.

Your word, O God, a living sword, cuts deep, and there it finds
The wall we build in self defence that blocks our sight and blinds;

We cannot see our neighbours' needs above the walls and bars
That we have made to save ourselves, and they cannot see ours.

Your word, O God, a living sword, strikes deep within each soul
And opens up the path by which you come to make us whole;
And with your love set deep within we need not stand alone,
For love drives out our faithless fears and makes your people one.

WEDNESDAY April 12

Reading: Luke 20:20–21:6

He looked up and saw rich people putting their gifts into the treasury; he also saw a poor widow put in two copper coins. He said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them, for all of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on."

Jesus spends a lot of time in the temple this week and there is a lot of talk about money.

The temple is exposed as a place of intrigue; the authorities send out spies to trap him with a question about whether paying taxes to the emperor is lawful. Jesus asks for a coin, which he points out bears the image — head and title — of the "divine" Augustus. "Then give to the emperor the things that are the emperor's and to God the things that are God's." (20:25) What does not belong to God? In Christ we see "the image of the invisible God." (Colossians 1:15)

The temple is exposed for a lack of compassion for the poor. Jesus points out the scribes who "have places of honour at banquets... but devour widows' houses." (20:45-47) Jesus watches a widow deposit into the treasury two leptas, the smallest denomination of Roman coin. The widow has traditionally been celebrated for her sacrificial giving, but one has to wonder if Jesus is lamenting the absence of compassion in the temple for the widows and orphans God commanded Israel to care for. This woman may well be one whose house has been devoured.

How do we as communities of faith, bear the image of Christ to the poor?

Reflection: *Hymn from Paul's letter to the Colossians 1:15-20*

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation.
For in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things
visible and invisible,
Whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers –
all things have been created through him and for him.
He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together.
He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the
firstborn of the dead,
So that he might come to have first place in everything.
For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,
And through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things,
Whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood
of his cross.

MAUNDY THURSDAY April 13

Reading: *Luke 22:1-65 (or John 13)*

Then he took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks he
broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body, which is given
for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” And he did the same with
the cup after supper, saying, “This cup that is poured out for you is
the new covenant in my blood. But see, the one who betrays me is
with me and his hand is on the table.” – Luke 22:19–21

In a wilderness of threat and danger, Jesus did not run or hide. He set a
table for his friends (and his enemies), broke bread, poured wine, and
told them that this would be how they would remember him, how he
would be present to them always.

This is the table at the centre of the kingdom of God. It is where we
experience the real presence of Jesus, where everyone is welcome and
there is enough for everyone. John in his gospel remembers how Jesus
washed the feet of his friends at this table (John 13) to show them
that to be his followers they must be servants of one another. Here we
experience the hospitality of God, and are nourished to do the work of
serving others.

In this last meal with his friends before his arrest Jesus remembers the
ancient Passover of deliverance from slavery in an empire like the one
seeking his death. Israel came out of slavery into freedom to become
God's covenant people, shaped by the commandments given at Sinai. In
his last supper with his followers, Jesus establishes a new covenant: “This
is my body, given for you.” And he gives them a new commandment:
“Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this
everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for
another.” (John 13:34-35)

Song or Prayer: CP 504; Colvin

Refrain: *Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love, show us how to serve, the neighbours we have from you.*

Kneels at the feet of his friends, silently washes their feet,
Master who acts as a slave to them. R
Neighbours are rich and poor, varied in colour and race,
Neighbours are near and far away. R
These are the ones we should serve, these are the ones we should
love;
All these are neighbours to us and you. R
Loving puts us on our knees, serving as though we are slaves;
This is the way we should live with you. R
Kneel at the feet of our friends, silently washing their feet;
This is the way we should live with you. R

GOOD FRIDAY April 14

Reading: *Luke 22:66–23:56*

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, while the sun's light failed; and the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, "Father, into your hands I commend my spirit." Having said this, he breathed his last. –Luke 23:44–46

The place is the skull, and Jesus is dying on the cross. He is mocked by the temple authorities, by his executioners and by one of the bandits crucified alongside him. They all say the same thing: save yourself, as though this would prove who Jesus is. There are echoes here of the temptation Jesus experienced in the wilderness before he began his ministry, when the devil tempted him to use his divine power in self-serving ways.

Instead, on the cross Jesus saves others. He promises salvation to the other bandit: "Today you will be with me in paradise," which means "God's garden", the new creation. He forgives those who have killed him.

Darkness falls as the slaughter of the Son of God reverberates through all creation. At the moment of his death, the temple veil, separating the holy of holies from the outer courts, is torn in two. The way to life with God is opened for all people by the death of the "Messiah of God, his chosen one."

Witnesses have different reactions to the death of Jesus. His executioner, a Roman centurion, declares him innocent. People from the city return home, beating their breasts. His followers, including women who have followed all the way from Galilee, watch from a distance.

What is your reaction to the death of Jesus?

Song or Prayer: CP 198; *Salve caput/tr. Alexander*

O sacred head, surrounded by crown of piercing thorn;
O royal head so wounded, reviled, and put to scorn,
Death's shadows rise before you, the glow of life decays,
Yet angel hosts adore you and tremble as they gaze.

Your youthfulness and vigour are spent, your strength is gone,
And in your tortured figure I see death drawing on;
What agony of dying, what love, to sinners free!
My Lord, all grace supplying, O turn your face on me!

Your sinless soul's oppression was all for sinners' gain;
Mine, mine was the transgression, but yours the deadly pain;
I bow my head, my Saviour, for I deserve your place;
O grant to me your favour, and heal me by your grace.

What language shall I borrow to thank you, dearest friend,
For this your dying sorrow, your mercy without end?
Lord, make me yours forever: your servant let me be,
And may I never, never betray your love for me.

HOLY SATURDAY April 15

Reading: *Luke 23:50–56*

Now there was a good and righteous man named Joseph, who though a member of the council, had not agreed to their plan and action. He came from the Jewish town of Arimathea, and he was waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God. – Luke 23:50–51

Today is a long day. For the followers of Jesus it was grief wrapped in the observance of Sabbath. For us, it is the long wait as Jesus lies silent in the tomb. It is a day to reflect on the brokenness of the world, where the innocent suffer unspeakable death. We mourn the inequities of the world, where we receive medical care while in other parts of the world, women die in childbirth; where we live in comfortable homes while unprecedented numbers of refugees are homeless; we eat as others starve. We must mourn the inequities in our own country, where the first peoples are hungry, are without clean water, and are waiting for their land to be returned to them.

Stories from PWRDF

Food sovereignty and Canada's first peoples

In 2015, PWRDF staff met with the Anglican Church of Canada's National Indigenous Anglican Bishop, Mark MacDonald. Together they undertook an exercise that showed the cost of basic necessities in the Arctic where a case of bottled water can cost over \$100. The bishop told the story of food in Indigenous cultures -- how permaculture was practiced and how hunting, fishing and gathering of Manomin, the "good seed" which we know as wild rice contributed to a healthy diet.

The introduction of western agricultural methods with colonization didn't allow for nomadic food gathering and food security declined dramatically. For Indigenous communities being able to hold on to their culture brings food security... and

food security means they are holding on to their culture. The two realities are interlinked. Indigenous communities need to have control over the food they eat. They are in need of food sovereignty.

Today is a day to fast, to repent of the ways in which our actions trample on the lives of others, and to wait with those who long for justice.

Reflection

For reflection and prayer today, you might want to read from Lamentations. Here is a section to pray in solidarity with the first nations people of Canada (5:1-6):

Remember, O Lord, what has befallen us;
Look, and see our disgrace!
Our inheritance has been turned over to strangers,
Our homes to aliens.
We have become orphans, fatherless;
Our mothers are like widows.
We must pay for the water we drink;
The wood we get must be bought.
With a yoke on our necks we are hard driven;
We are weary, we are given no rest.
We have made a pact with Egypt and Assyria,
To get enough bread.

THE EVENING OF EASTER SUNDAY OF THE RESURRECTION April 16

Reading: Luke 24:1-49

Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said: but they did not see him. Then he said to them, “Oh, how foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have declared! Was it not necessary that the Messiah should suffer these things and then enter into his glory?” Then beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them the things about himself in all the scriptures. As they came near the village to which they were going, he walked ahead as if he were going on. But they urged him strongly, saying, “Stay with us, because it is almost evening and the day is nearly over.” So he went in to stay with them. When he was at table with them, he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he vanished from their sight. They said to each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?” That same hour they got up and returned to Jerusalem; and they found the eleven and their companions gathered together. They were saying, “The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon.” Then they told what had happened on the road, and how he had been made known to them in the breaking of the bread. —Luke 24:24-35

Two disciples recognize Jesus when he takes bread, blesses it, breaks it and gives it to them. These are the same actions that are described when Jesus fed 5000 people on the hillside in Galilee, and when he gathered with his friends for their last meal together before his death.

Here, once again, is the table where Jesus meets us. It is the table where we celebrate the eucharist, it is our dining room table, it is the table where PWRDF gathers us together to bring food to the hungry and to work in partnership toward food security and sovereignty for all people.

When we eat at this table, we are connected to the soil of the earth, to the Saviour of the world who provides the bread, and with one another. We eat the bread of life, and we share the bread of justice.

Like the disciples in Emmaus left holding bread in their hands, may we go out from here proclaiming resurrection – that Jesus has shown us the way out of death into life. May we set tables along the way, eat with strangers, and bring good news to the poor. And may we have joy, because we are on our way home to the city where God will dwell with his people in new creation.

Song or Prayer: CP 84; Bourne

Lord, enthroned in heavenly splendour first-begotten from the dead,
thou alone, our strong defender, liftest up thy people's head.

Alleluia, alleluia, Jesu, true and living bread.

Paschal Lamb, thine offering, finished once for all when thou wast slain,

in its fullness undiminished shall for evermore remain,

Alleluia, alleluia, cleansing souls from every stain.

Life-imparting heavenly manna, stricken rock with streaming side,
heaven and earth with loud hosanna worship thee, the Lamb who died,

Alleluia, alleluia, risen, ascended, glorified!

Notes

1. Ellen F. Davis. *Scripture, Culture, Agriculture: An agrarian reading of the Bible*. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p.58.
2. Davis, p. 29.
3. Wendell Berry, "A Native Hill", in *The Art of the Commonplace* (Berkeley, CA: Counterpoint, 2002), p. 20.
4. Walter Brueggemann recites Psalm 146. On Being. PBS. Interview with Krista Tippett. <http://onbeing.org/blog/walter-brueggemann-recites-psalm-146/4159> (accessed June 14, 2016).
5. Walter Brueggemann. *The Liturgy of Abundance, The Myth of Scarcity*. In *Christian Century*, Vol 116, no. 10, March 24, 1999. This essay is well worth a read if you want to explore this theme further.
6. Brian J. Walsh and Sylvia C Keesmaat. *Colossians Remixed: Subverting the Empire* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), p. 178.
7. Wendell Berry. "Manifesto: The Mad Farmer Liberation Front," in *The Selected Poems of Wendell Berry* (Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint, 1998), pp. 87–88.
8. Ellen Davis, p. 70.
9. Davis, pp. 76–77.
10. Paula Gooder. *Journey to the Empty Tomb*. (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2015), p. 30.

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