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## **MISSION SUNDAY SERMON**

**St. James Anglican and the Church of St. Stephen & St. Bede**

**Winnipeg, Manitoba**

**Sunday, July 5, 2015**

**GUEST SPEAKER:**

The Rev. Deacon Maylanne Maybee, Principal, Centre for Christian Studies

**TOPIC:**

Work of the Primate's World Relief Development Fund

**SCRIPTURE REFERENCES:**

2 Samuel 1:1-5, 9-10; Psalm 48; 2 Corinthians 12:2-10; Mark 6:1-13.

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Thank you, Murray, for the invitation to preach. My main purpose is to tell you about the work of PWRDF and how you might participate and support it.

But first, a few other things!

1. I have known Murray for many years. We served together at the national level on the Anti-Racism Working Group. Murray has been tireless about breaking down the barriers of racism and injustice that divide us as Christians and Canadians.
2. Murray asked me to vest and serve as a deacon. The Diocese of Rupert's Land has been ordaining people to the distinctive diaconate as part of a wider movement to restore the integrity of this order as distinct in its own right and not a stepping stone to the priesthood. Deacons are meant to be living signs who point the faithful to a style of ministry that is collaborative, practical, daily, and exemplary.

Deacons do not enact sacrificial gestures in the liturgy, recalling the saving death of Christ on the cross. Rather, they lift up the daily acts of Jesus ministry of teaching, serving, and healing – as a way of seeing God at work in the world and inviting you to do the same. Deacons read the gospel, interpret the word's needs and hopes in intercessory prayer, set the table, receive and prepare the bread and wine, help to distribute communion, clean the vessels, and dismiss the assembly.

These are sacramental signs that lift up what is ordinary – telling and listening to stories of faith, praying for people who are needy or sorrowful or living in hope, preparing and serving food, cleaning up messes, and getting people out the door to work and learn and be with others – as a way of seeing God at work in the world and inviting all God's people to do the same.

Nowadays, this cluster of actions is hard to see – often they're done by the priest, often by members of the congregation, usually, both.

But I have always felt a calling to preach and teach in the church, to seek out what the world needs and engage the church in responding, and to serve in the liturgy in a way that symbolizes our common *diakonia*. I am glad to do that with you this morning.

3. I also want to attend briefly to how the scriptures are speaking to us today.

The story from Samuel is part of an ongoing narrative which tells us how God acts in history and in human beings – through people like David who was no saint but who was still an agent of God in Israel.

The cryptic passage from Corinthians is a personal confession of Paul the apostle – who had had a powerful mystical experience where he was caught up “in the third heaven”, yet is motivated not by his vision but by the unnamed thorn in his side. His chronic pain or weakness is what allows God to act in him.

And the gospel account tells us a story in two parts:

- a) that no matter how powerful God’s words and deeds in Christ might be, God cannot act without the faith and cooperation of human beings. Jesus could not do deeds of power (apart from healing a few sick people) in his hometown as they were blinded by their familiarity with Jesus and his family. How can this person we knew as a boy, who has no father, who works with his hands – speak with such wisdom and insight and perform deeds of power?
- b) that Jesus leaves his kin and household and hometown and commissions his disciples to go forth in pairs. To share the fullness of God’s reign, performing deeds of power wherever the gospel is received and embraced.

Our God is a vulnerable God, who depends on our response to act. If we spurn God because of familiarity or egotism, God will be manifest elsewhere, among people who acknowledge their need and weakness and their hope and faith.

That brings me to the heart of what I want to speak to you about this morning: the saving work of the Primate’s World Relief and Development Fund.

Most of you know that the PWRDF is the Anglican Church’s agency for relief, development, and global justice. PWRDF builds its fund from the generosity of Anglican parishes like yours from across Canada. They share this generosity in solidarity with partners in Canada and around the world – *including Canadian Lutheran World Relief*.

PWRDF collects and distributes funds for disaster relief. For Anglicans, it is the go-to organization in moments when we learn of devastating earthquakes such as the ones that struck Nepal in May. In fact, one of the PWRDF staff, Naba Gurung, himself a native of Nepal, was there on the ground to witness the plight of the Nepalese, monitor the aid they were receiving, and bring direct news from those in need. It’s this kind of one-to-one relationship with local communities that makes the difference between PWRDF and other agencies to which we could donate.

PWRDF works in partnership with other churches throughout the Anglican Communion and with ACT Alliance, a coalition of more than 140 churches working together to create positive change in the lives of poor and marginalized people in over 140 countries. Members are associated with the World Council of Churches or the Lutheran World Federation.

One example of partnership is EHALE, a local word in Mozambique that means “health”. Through that partnership, PWRDF has been able to direct funds to a support Community Health Workers who work with people like Agita affected by HIV and aids. Agita is a woman infected by the disease, abandoned by her husband, who was brought to health and a new life by community support, meal supplements, and employment opportunities.

EHALE also produces radio broadcasts reaching a 50 kilometer radius around a local city, touching on issues related to maternal health, gender equality, violence against women, malaria prevention, etc. Listeners are able to phone in with questions or to express their opinions. EHALE is distributing crank-powered radios to women’s groups in the area so they can gather to listen to the programs and discuss them.

PWRDF promotes and educates for justice – currently with a focus on food security. Starting today, PWRDF is offering a week of learning at the Sorrento Centre in BC. They will be joined by partners from Tanzania, to help participants look at how everything – good nutrition, good health, good learning, good work, and good community – begins with good food. They will also be joined by three Canadian food producers who will share their experiences of how they contribute to food security in their own communities, rooted in their faith. National Indigenous Bishop Mark MacDonald will also explore food issues in Canada’s indigenous communities. And a representative from the Canadian Food Grains Bank will look at some of the big picture issues that impact food security in Canada and globally.

And PWRDF encourages initiatives such as the Pikangikum project – not a sudden disaster like Nepal, not an agricultural project in Africa or Bangladesh. Rather, a slow growing disaster not far from home. Pikangikum is a First Nations community near Red Lake, Ontario, not far from the Manitoba border. It has a population of 2400 people, half of whom are youth or young adults. It made international headlines a few years ago as the suicide capital of the world.

Through the initiative of local community leaders, supporters in the GTA, and the intervention of Bishop Mark MacDonald, PWRDF has been able to raise funds to start supplying water to houses in the community. Small, incremental steps that over time will help to restore self-sufficiency and dignity in an economically and spiritually devastated community.

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Jesus sent his disciples in pairs with authority over unclean spirits to cast out demons and health the sick communities where they were well received.

PWRDF helps the Church be the arms and feet of Jesus in today's complex and globalized world. It helps to cast out demons of disease, and injustice and it does this in pairs with other organizations, multiplying God's ability to act.

PWRDF invites the community of Christians of which we are part to pray and act and give to the wider world, to cast out demons of disease and poverty.

If you are going to pray for the people of Pikangikum, for the women of Mozambique, for the people of Nepal or for those who are hungry, find out more about them! Seek out information in the news. Read PWRDF literature. Search the Internet.

If you are going to act, learn about the issues, pay attention to how you vote, ask your MPs and candidates for election for what you think Canada and the world needs.

If you are going to give, do it with your right hand and your left.

- a) You can give individually, using your blue envelopes if you still use that system;
- b) You can go to the PWRDF website and click "donate".
- c) You can mail a cheque to PWRDF at their Toronto address;
- d) You Can phone the number on the PWRDF website.
- e) Better yet, you can become a monthly donor.

In that way, we can help God to perform mighty deeds of power, to heal the sick, and cast out the demons of poverty and despair,

To whom, Father, Son and Holy Spirit be all honour and glory. Amen.