
MISSION SUNDAY SERMON
St. James Anglican and the Church of St. Stephen & St. Bede
Winnipeg, Manitoba
Sunday, November 13, 2016

GUEST SPEAKER:

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

TOPIC:

Work of the Primate's World Relief Development Fund

Allow me to begin by thanking Murray Still for inviting me to speak with you again from this pulpit. The last time was a year and a half ago, in July 2015.

And allow me to bring you a word from our sponsor, the Centre for Christian Studies, where I have been serving as principal since August 2011. The Centre for Christian Studies is in a small house on Maryland St. at Wolseley, a replica of the house where J.S. Woodsworth lived. The school moved there 18 years ago from its original home in Toronto. We recently celebrated our 120th anniversary and are still going strong. "CCS" trains and educates students in theology and ministry. Our students are deacons, diaconal ministers, and lay leaders. They are United, Anglican, and sometimes Lutheran. We offer a four-year program, four-day programs and even four-hour programs. Take a brochure and check out our website!

And so, I bring you greetings from my workplace, from the parish of St. Luke's where I worship, from the staff and volunteers of the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund, and from their new Executive Director, Will Postma, who replaced Adele Finney and

I want to speak to you today about the work of the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund, to inspire you to see its work as integral to the way we should live as Christians in the world.

PWRDF, now in its 57th year of ministry in and for the world, 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 was established in 1959 in response to two events. The first was the Springhill, Nova Scotia mine disaster when Anglicans across the country donated \$100,000 to the families of the men who perished or were injured when the mine collapsed underground. The inaugural year of PWRDF coincided with the United Nations Refugee Year. According to a short history of the first 25 years of PWRDF, "By resolution of Synod, \$100,000 raised in the first year of the Fund was to be used for refugee needs around the world."

In keeping with its origins, PWRDF continues to collect and distribute funds for disaster relief, at home and abroad. They are able to expand their base and quicken their local response through strategic partnerships such as the one with ACT Alliance, and with the Canadian Food Grains Bank.

For Anglicans, PWRDF is the go-to organization in moments when we learn of devastating events like the fire that struck Fort McMurray in May, or Hurricane Matthew that struck vulnerable communities in Haiti and Cuba in early October.

Over 1.4 million people in Haiti and 175,000 in Cuba were affected by Hurricane Matthew. PWRDF sent \$40,000 for relief work in Haiti and a further \$20,000 for relief work in Cuba through the ACT Alliance, whose members were active in both countries long before the hurricane and are there for the long term. The major needs in Haiti are shelter, water, sanitation, hygiene and food. Cholera and the loss of crops and livelihoods are of particular concern. In Cuba, the focus is on providing food security, water and sanitation, shelter and psychosocial support. Food was provided for 30 days, as well as tools and seeds to help farmers to replant the crops that were destroyed.

PWRDF continues to support refugee programs overseas and in Canada. Through the ACT Alliance, a global ecumenical relief agency, and the Canadian Food Grains Bank, based here in Winnipeg, both of which PWRDF is a member, they have been responding to the refugee crisis in the Middle East since the start of the civil war in Syria. This year, after 25 years of advocacy work, the Primate was able to send a thank-you letter to the Government of Canada for reinstating the Interim Federal Health Program for Refugees. The letter stated “our church was among the first to sign on to the Private Sponsorship Program when it was established in 1978. Since then, Canadian Anglicans have welcomed hundreds of refugees to Canada giving of their time, energy and significant financial resources.” Today, 14 of the Anglican Church’s 30 dioceses hold Sponsorship Agreements with the department of Immigrant, Refugees, and Citizenship. It is mostly volunteer Refugee Coordinators – like Rupert’s Land’s own Gail Schnabl, who carry out the on-the-ground sponsorship work.

PWRDF promotes, advocates, and educates for justice. For the last three years the focus has been on Food Security through the Fred Says campaign. According to the Primate, Archbishop Fred Hiltz, food security is an important part of the work of PWRDF. Food is not just about staving off starvation. Without food, people have a difficult time taking medicine, sleeping, going to school, working, providing for themselves and their family. There are 5 As to the kind of Food Security that addresses these needs – food that is available, accessible, acceptable, appropriate, and that gives agency to the recipient.

Through stories, videos, buttons, and events such as a weeklong educational camp at Sorrento Centre in BC, PWRDF has emphasized these 5As to increase understanding of the complexities and challenges of development and food distribution.

And PWRDF has an Indigenous Peoples' Development Program with the goal of building partnerships of mutual respect and trust with Indigenous people, and creating strong, healthy, and self-reliant communities. PWRDF supports Indigenous initiatives that empower women and youth, revitalize language and culture, advance traditional knowledge, and strengthen networks and partnerships with and among Indigenous peoples. An example is the water project in Pikangikum, a First Nations community near Red Lake, Ontario. It has a population of 2400 people, half of whom are youth or young adults, and made international headlines a few years ago as the suicide capital of the world. PWRDF is one of several partners who are working to ensure clean running water and waste water systems in fourteen of the most vulnerable households in that community. It does not resolve the historic and systemic disregard for Indigenous rights to life, physical integrity, housing, sanitation and health, dignity and well-being. It did not prevent a house fire in the spring of this year. But it was a start, begun at the initiative of the community, done in good faith, and a sign of lasting commitment and endeavor.

In today's gospel, Jesus does not share his disciples' enthusiasm for temples, for palaces or structures of political or religious power that shore up those who already have privilege and wealth. That is not God's way. Jesus warns his disciples not to be led astray, yet he does not stir up fear or foreboding. Rather he prepares them for conflict and opposition as the way of the world. There *will* be bad leaders and false prophets. There *will* be uprisings. There *will* be natural disasters – earthquakes and famines and disease. And he gives assurance to those who act in his name: they will be given the words and wisdom to endure and withstand difficult times.

PWRDF helps the Church be in a globalized world where there is misuse of power, where there is injustice and uprising and natural disasters. It imparts wisdom and support to those who suffer and helps them to endure and withstand difficult times.

PWRDF invites the community of Christians of which we are part to pray and act and give to the wider world.

If you are going to pray for the people of Pikangikum or the people of Cuba or Haiti or for those who are hungry, find out more about them! Seek out information in the news. Read PWRDF literature. Search the Internet. There are excellent tools on their website for Advent and Lent. Use them!

If you are going to act, pay attention to the issues, learn about responses and policies that make a positive difference, join with others who are working for change, tell your MLA and MP 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 Source of Life, Word and Holy Spirit be all honour and glory. Amen.