

POVERTY

Love your neighbour as yourself



A liturgy for marking October 17, the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

Opening Prayer (unison)

God of all creation, how abundant is your love! How loving are your ways! Through Jesus you taught us the words and actions for how to love – with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our mind, and with all our strength; we are to love others as we love ourselves. Through Jesus you showed us whom to love: poor and rich, sick and healthy, homeless and homeowner, unemployed and manager, hungry and banquet host, shunned woman and respected homemaker, lost child and dutiful offspring, disabled and able-bodied, wrongfully accused and interpreter of the law, pious leader and questioning follower, members of another race or faith and the powerful. The list is as endless as your love, which is never “either–or” but always “both.” With the persistence of your disciples, may we love inclusively and abundantly, bringing good news and transformation to the world, and a celebration of the diversity and uniqueness of your creation. Amen.

Suggested Hymns (from The Book of Praise)

- 717 - We cannot own the sunlit sky
- 229 - Jesu, Jesu, fill us with your love
- 704 - Teach me, God, to wonder
- 715 - Love the Lord your God
- 587 - Called as partners in Christ's service

Statement of Faith (adapted from Living Faith, section 8)

We bow before the mystery of God's love. From it came our creation. By it we are daily nurtured. We respond to the God who is love, by loving in return. Love means seeking the best for others. Love for God leads to love for others. We cannot claim to love God, whom we do not see, if we hate those about us, whom we do see. Love of God and neighbour fulfils the law of God. Love follows the example of Jesus Christ. In love and justice, we oppose prejudice and discrimination. We deal fairly with each other and strive to change the customs and practices that oppress and enslave others. We protect the rights of others. We stand with our neighbours in their struggle for dignity and respect. We work for the common good.

Suggested Scripture

Mark 12:28-34 (The First Commandment)

Luke 10:25-37 (The Parable of the Good Samaritan)

Scripture Notes

In the gospel of Mark, a scribe asks Jesus “Which commandment is the first of all?” Jesus responds: “The first is, Hear O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this, you shall love your neighbour as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.”

Jesus explains that these two commandments belong together. They are not equal, but they are connected. We are called first to love God. This is our highest and most important calling. One way we show our love for God, Jesus teaches us, is by loving our neighbour (Luke 10: 25-37).

Through God’s abiding love, we are relational beings with a responsibility to care for each other. *Living Faith* states “Justice requires concern for the poor of the world. It seeks the best way to create well-being in every society. It is concerned about employment, education, and health as well as rights and responsibilities.”

How do we do this as individuals and as a congregation? In what ways does your congregation minister to low-income neighbours?

In the parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus tells a story in answer to the question “who is my neighbour?” The parable is a story about a remarkable sharing of God’s abiding love and grace between two strangers. The Samaritan (an outsider and stranger) makes a personal connection with the broken, beaten man lying on the road. Caring for the beaten man was not simple. It took time, energy and resources. It was an unexpected, and possibly inconvenient, delay in the Samaritan’s travel itinerary. We don’t know what other personal sacrifice this encounter cost the Samaritan. We don’t know how the Samaritan’s help was received by the beaten man. We do not know what the broken man was feeling throughout this encounter.

Where do you see the face of God in this story?

Canada is a prosperous nation. Still, one in ten children live in poverty. Hundreds of thousands of people use food banks each month. Aboriginal children and racial or ethnic minority groups experience disproportionately high poverty rates. Poverty is not just about material deprivation. Poverty affects an individual’s health. It limits choices. It isolates. It is shaming and demoralizing. Where poverty persists, barriers are erected and community cohesion breaks down.

Where is the need in your community? Do you know your neighbour's story?
Where do you see the face of God in your community?

There is great need for God's love and compassion in our broken world. We are strengthened, and made courageous in the knowledge that God's love is self-giving (1 Jn. 4:8-12). Opportunities for sharing God's love and grace surround us daily, and are often unexpected.

Share a personal story about an unexpected invitation from God to share God's abundant, self-giving love. How were you changed by the experience?

Prayer of the People (responsive)

God of loving and just relationships, as the lawyer came to Jesus, we come to you. We ask, "How can we live faithfully today?"

Let us love with all our heart, soul, strength and mind, loving our neighbour as ourself.

We try to keep your commandments, and be neighbours to people in need. But in loving your laws have we too created barriers? Forgive us for accepting the growing gap between rich and poor people and the growing number of people living in poverty. Forgive us for accepting the disproportionate number of racial and ethnical minority groups and Aboriginal people who live in poverty. Forgive us if we have been like the priest and the Levite, walking away from people in need, following our own codes of behaviour, protecting our own security and privilege, even when it excludes and demeans others.

Let us love with all our heart, soul, strength and mind, loving our neighbour as ourself.

God of the poor and the rich, the privileged and the oppressed, you created each of us in your image. You sent Jesus to show us your way. Open our eyes to see Jesus in the faces of the poor; open our ears to listen to their stories; open our minds to learn with poor people – about removing barriers, changing systems, freeing us all from the oppression of poverty. Give us strength to stand by our impoverished neighbours; to persist, to advocate, to carry them when they lose courage; and to be carried by them when we lose our way.

Let us love with all our heart, soul, strength and mind, loving our neighbour as ourself.

Today we particularly pray for poor people in Canada – like single mothers sacrificing to feed and clothe their children; disabled people and their families struggling for survival; Aboriginal people broken and alienated; new immigrant, refugee and visible minority people experiencing repeated discrimination.

Let us love with all our heart, soul, strength and mind, loving our neighbour as ourself.

God of the new covenant, we long to be one people – neighbours, brothers and sisters, living together in dignity and in just relationships, knowing you and filled with the Spirit. Amen.



Jesus is asked, “Teacher, which commandment in the law is the greatest?”

He replies, “You shall love the Lord you God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the greatest and first commandment.

And a second is like it: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.”

(Matthew 22:36-39)

Who lives in Poverty?

- One in ten children in Canada. One in four children in Aboriginal families grow up in poverty.
- Racial and ethnic minority Canadians and new immigrants.
- Single mothers.

The Changing World of Work in Canada

- A single person must work full time hours, for a full year, for about \$10 per hour to reach the poverty line.
- Close to 1/3 of those working for low wages have some college or university education. 8% of Aboriginal people have a bachelor degree or higher; this number is 22% among the rest of Canadians. This is a significant gap.
- Temporary and part-time jobs, and jobs with few benefits are increasing.
- **In 1989**, 11% of working women and 12% of working men had temporary jobs.
In 2004, 23% of working women and 20% of working men had temporary jobs.

Poverty and Health

Various factors contribute to an individual’s health:

- 25% is determined by access to health care; 50% by the social and economic environment; 10% to the physical environment; 15% to biology.
- People on low incomes generally have poorer health.
- Aboriginal Canadians suffer from poorer health and have a shorter lifespan than the average non-Aboriginal Canadian.
- A living wage, decent housing and a strong network of family and friends are major factors affecting an individual’s health.

The Impact of the Recession on Canadians

- In March 2009 more than 790,000 people used food banks. There was an 18% increase in food bank use in 2009.
- 400,000 jobs were lost between October 2008 and October 2009. One in four workers making \$10 per hour or less, lost their job.
- Despite a rise in Employment Insurance (EI) coverage, almost half of the unemployed did not receive benefits. Thousands of Canadian have exhausted their EI benefits without finding new work.

Poverty is...

(reflections from children in North Bay, ON)

Wishing you could go to McDonald's
getting a basket from the Santa Fund
feeling ashamed when my dad can't get a job
not buying books at the book fair
not getting to go to birthday parties
hearing my mom and dad fight over money
not ever getting a pet because it costs too much
wishing you had a nice house
not being able to go camping
not getting a hot dog on hot dog day
not getting pizza on pizza day
not going to Canada's Wonderland
not being able to have your friends sleep over
pretending that you forgot your lunch
being afraid to tell your mom that you need gym shoes
not having any breakfast sometimes
not being able to play hockey
sometimes really hard because my mom gets scared
and she cries
hiding your feet so the teacher won't get cross when
you don't have boots
not being able to go to Cubs or play soccer
not being able to take swimming lessons
not being able to take the electives at school (downhill skiing)
not being able to afford a holiday
not having pretty barrettes for your hair
not having your own private backyard
being teased for the way you are dressed
not getting to go on school trips

Source: *Our Neighbours' Voices: Will We Listen?*, Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition, Toronto: James Lorimer, 1998, pg. 107.
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October 17

is the International Day for the
Eradication of Poverty.

Around the world, people will affirm
their commitment to ending poverty.
Pray. Lead a worship service. Invite a
group of people to sign, the
“Dignity for All” campaign card.
Poverty can be reduced.

Resources

- “The Growing Gap in Canada,” Justice Ministries 2007 report to the 133rd General Assembly (www.presbyterian.ca)
- Citizens for Public Justice’s “Dignity for All” Campaign (www.dignityforall.ca or www.cpj.ca)
- Interfaith Social Assistance Reform Coalition (www.isarc.ca)
- Campaign 2000 (www.campaign2000.ca)
- Make Poverty History (www.makepovertyhistory.org)
- Food Banks Canada (www.cafb-acba.ca)
- The Canadian Senate Standing Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology’s report “In From the Margins—A Call to Action on Poverty, Housing and Homelessness” (sen.parl.gc.ca)

Justice Ministries would be delighted to lead a workshop in your congregation or presbytery.

For more information contact Katharine Masterton at
kmasterton@presbyterian.ca
Or call 1-800-619-7301 ext 250.

What you and your congregation can do

- Mark October 17 in prayer and worship.
- Learn about poverty in your community. Contact a local United Way or food bank for information. Person to person ministry can be transforming. Volunteer with a community outreach program and get to know your neighbours.
- Sign the Citizens for Public Justice’s “Dignity for All” campaign card.
- Write to your provincial and federal members of parliament (or legislature). Justice Ministries can provide sample letters, or help you plan for a meeting.

A pan-Canadian movement is building
and we want you to be a part of it!



Everyone has a right to live life with dignity. **Yet millions of Canadians currently live in poverty.** People are mobilizing. Cities, provinces and territories are taking note and taking action. It is time for the federal government step up and do its part. **Working together, we can eliminate poverty in Canada!**

Show your support! Sign and return the attached call to action.
Your contact information will be added to our list and you will receive regular campaign updates.

Dignity for All: The Campaign for a Poverty-Free Canada was founded by Canada Without Poverty and Citizens for Public Justice in 2009. Inaugural Campaign Committee: ACORN Canada, Campaign 2000, Canadian Association of Social Workers, Canadian Co-operative Association, Canadian Council on Social Development, Canadian Labour Congress, Canadian Teachers' Federation, Centre for Equality Rights in Accommodation, Council of Canadians with Disabilities, Make Poverty History, and the Regina Anti-Poverty Ministry, in consultation with Collective for a Poverty-Free Quebec.

dignity for all: the campaign for a poverty-free canada

www.dignityforall.ca

1210-1 Nicholas Street Ottawa, ON K1N 7B7
Phone: 1-800-810-1076 or 1-800-667-8046; Email: dignity@dignityforall.ca

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the campaign for a poverty-free canada

I believe that freedom from poverty is a human right.

I believe in equality among all people.

I believe we are all entitled to social and economic security.

I believe in dignity for all.

NOW is the time to end poverty in Canada.

Name (please print)

Organization (if applicable)

Street Address

City / Province / Postal Code

Email

Signature

individual endorsement organizational endorsement

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The Dignity for All Campaign calls for vigorous and sustained action by the federal government to combat the structural causes of poverty in Canada.

- We want a federal plan for poverty elimination that complements provincial and territorial plans.
- We want a federal anti-poverty Act that ensures enduring federal commitment and accountability for results.
- And, we want sufficient federal investment in social security for all Canadians.

Together, we can eliminate poverty in Canada!

www.dignityforall.ca

dignity for all

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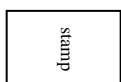
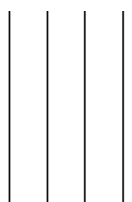
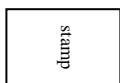
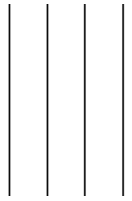
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