

First Sunday in Lent

Leader: On this first Sunday in Lent, we remember how God's Spirit drove Jesus into the wilderness so he could struggle with his revealed identity as the Son of God—and try to clarify God's will for his life.

People: Today we begin a similar journey of discovery for ourselves.

Leader: As Jesus spent forty days struggling with these important issues, so will we.

People: But our struggle will take place not in an isolated wilderness—free from life's distractions. Our struggle will take place in the very midst of our normal day-to-day existence.

Leader: In the wilderness, Jesus found his way by paying attention to God's voice and by devoting himself fully to God's will.

People: On our journey, we must do the same.

Leader: Brothers and sisters, let us now begin this special journey together, and let us begin with prayer.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, as we begin our own Lenten journeys, help each of us devote ourselves anew to the discovery of your will for our lives. Please silence in us any voice but yours and help us to develop a fuller realization of just who—and whose—we really are. This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.



Liturgy composed
by the Rev. Dr.
Philip Wilson
Produced by
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Sight for the Blind

Mrs. Karthihai is from a very poor family in the Guruvikaransalai slum area. Mrs. Karthihai's daughter lost her sight at the age of six. When she was taken for treatment, the hospital informed the family that the girl's sight could be restored, but they demanded an incredibly large amount of money to do the operation: 23,500 rupees. Mr. and Mrs. Karthihai were taken aback—they could never afford that kind of money.

After years of living in poverty, Mrs. Karthihai had joined a self-help group with PWS&D program partners, Madurai Non-Formal Education Centre (MNEC). With nowhere else to go to help her daughter, Mrs. Karthihai told her story to the staff at MNEC and they were able to step in and negotiate on her behalf. They worked with government officials and hospital employees and were able to secure the operation, free of charge.

Mrs. Karthihai was ecstatic. Her daughter received the operation to restore her eyesight and the young girl is now able to see clearly. The family is grateful to the program for the help they received to improve their daughter's future.

MNEC works with women in communities of southern India to improve their living conditions. With the help of social workers and other professionals, they work together on literacy, health, education, leadership and legal programs. They also lobby local government bodies for basic services.



*Mrs. Karthihai
and her daughter*

Your regular support of PWS&D will help improve the quality of life for families in India. Contact PWS&D today to learn more and join the fight against poverty.



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Second Sunday in Lent

Leader: On this second Sunday in Lent, we continue our Lenten journey of self-discovery.

People: Today, we recognize that each one of us is a loved child of God.

Leader: This means that each one of us is also a member of a historic family—a family where we are all dearly loved by God. But being part of a family isn't always easy.

People: Sometimes we compete with each other for the first place. Sometimes we disagree with each other and fight amongst ourselves. Sometimes we rebel and follow our own paths. Sometimes we break the hearts of those who love us.

Leader: Yet, despite our many shortcomings, God still loves us unconditionally.

People: And in love, God calls each of us to be faithful and to receive his gift of life eternal.

Leader: As beloved children of the Most High, let us come to God in prayer.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, as we continue our Lenten journey, help us to remember you love each of us with an amazing love: a love that has no beginning—and has no end. Trusting in that love, help us also to be faithful to you in all aspects of our lives. This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.



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Supporting Vulnerable Children in Malawi

Orphaned children in Blantyre, Malawi believe in their futures, thanks to the love and protection from people like Mary Macheso and the support of caring Canadians through PWS&D.

In the urban slum of Nkolokoti, women are typically the main caregivers, but Mary does so much more than just care for her family. Mary noticed that children who have lost one or both parents to AIDS are very vulnerable to abuse and lack basic human rights. Witnessing the plight of these children, Mary decided to mobilize her neighbours to look for solutions.

A committee was formed in 2005 and Mary became the chair of an Orphan Families in Crisis support group, which receives funding from PWS&D. Committee members volunteer their time to run a drop-in centre to reduce stress on extended families and provide food and other services. The centre is a safe place where children can come to learn and play.

Mary does even more than just provide food and shelter for these children. She is an advocate for them. With PWS&D's support, Mary was trained to work within her community to educate others on the plight of orphans and fight stigma and discrimination.

PWS&D and dedicated people like Mary are working to ensure the survival of vulnerable children through poverty-reduction strategies and community involvement, providing immediate relief combined with long-term strategies to bring lasting change.

Your regular support of PWS&D will help ensure aid is available for vulnerable children in Malawi. Contact PWS&D today to learn more and join the fight against poverty.



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Third Sunday in Lent

Leader: On this third Sunday in Lent, we continue our Lenten journey of self-discovery.

People: Today, we recognize that it is God who makes provision for our lives—and for our eternal salvation.

Leader: Like God provided for his people in the wilderness with water from a rock and manna from the heavens, God continues to provide for all our needs today.

People: God may not give us everything we want, but he makes sure we have everything we need.

Leader: In Jesus, God also provides the ‘living waters’ from which we can freely drink to nourish our souls.

People: We know that it is God—and God alone who provides for all our physical needs, and provides the means for our eternal salvation through Christ.

Leader: These are free gifts, provided by a loving God; therefore, we’re able to boast only in God—and not in ourselves. Let us pray.

Prayer: Gracious Lord, we thank you that on a daily basis, you generously provide for all our needs; but most of all, we thank you for Jesus and for the salvation that is ours because of him. Lord, on a daily basis, may our bodies be renewed as we eat and drink to your glory and may our souls also be renewed as we drink deeply of your ‘living waters.’ This we ask in Jesus name. Amen.



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A New Face in Canada

Sometimes a “no” should not be a “no.” That was our feeling regarding Ashebir, a refugee from Eritrea who was sponsored by Morningside High Park Presbyterian Church through PWS&D. But Ashebir had been refused for resettlement in Canada. At 24 years of age, he had already been assaulted in a refugee camp in Kenya, fled to the Sudan and landed in Libya.

Hildy Stollery, chair of the missions and outreach team of the congregation, was devastated by the news. Why was he refused? How could she tell Ashebir’s cousin, Haile, who lives in Toronto? Eritrea has an appalling human rights record, imprisoning religious minorities and forcibly recruiting young people for military service where casualties are high. There is no time limit for military service and deserters are brutally punished; many die in the ongoing war with Ethiopia. Eritreans deported home by foreign governments have been tortured and killed.

Hildy wondered aloud if maybe the Canadian authorities knew something we did not and attempted to prepare herself to accept disappointment. When it was explained that refugees have only 45 minutes, including translation, to tell their life story, Hildy was speechless. Although she had never met Ashebir, she and the members of the missions team were praying for him. They saw him as a human being, loved by God and deserving a chance to live in safety. She agreed we had to do something to assist this young man.

Refugee ministry is about seeing people the way God sees them. It also requires the faithfulness and perseverance of the God who never abandons us. An appeal to the Federal Court of Canada was made by the Morningside-High Park congregation. The lawyer representing Canadian Citizenship & Immigration reviewed the case, and the “no” decision was quashed without even having to plead the case in court. What profound joy when we heard this news. This “no” should not have been a “no.” Praise God! Ashebir arrived safely in Canada in fall 2008.



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Fourth Sunday in Lent

Leader: On this fourth Sunday in Lent, we continue our Lenten journey of self-discovery.

People: Today, we recognize that the old order of being right by doing right is over.

Leader: Though our actions sometimes indicate otherwise, we know in our hearts that our salvation can never be determined by our own righteousness.

People: No, we are saved by faith in Christ alone.

Leader: In our hearts, we know that in Christ, we are indeed reconciled to God; and the penalty for all our sin has been paid.

People: Unfortunately, our heads and our hearts sometimes follow different paths. Sometimes our old ways of thinking: that we're self-reliant and self-sufficient, get the better of us.

Leader: In such times, we need to remember that, no matter how hard we may try, we can never achieve our own salvation. It is simply a gift of God—a gift received in faith. Let us pray.

Prayer: Father, forgive us for those times when we try to make it on our own and feel justified by our own acts. In these Lenten days, assure us of your loving presence and guiding hand in our lives. Enable us to trust in you—and your leading, all the days of our lives. This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.



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Speaking Out Against Discrimination in El Salvador

“For 15 years I bowed my head, but now I hold it high,” says Louisa from El Salvador, who is taking part in a women’s group supported by PWS&D and the Canadian International Development Agency.

PWS&D is working with the Institute for Women’s Research, Training and Development (IMU) in El Salvador to support women in their goal to break cycles of poverty and end discrimination. The women form study circles to learn about health, education, income generation and other topics that help them improve life for their families and communities. The program covers the costs of the meetings and provides the women with a safe, secure place to talk about their challenges and needs.

IMU helps the groups learn how to use communication to break down barriers and offers training in subjects such as conflict resolution, gender issues, leadership, human rights and economics. They teach members how to overcome violence, build solidarity, share knowledge and engage the government. As well, the groups are given opportunities to learn hands-on skills such as hair styling, computers, sewing and healthcare, to give the women independence and increase the family’s income.

Participants of the study circles have often undergone a complete shift in their thinking. No longer viewing themselves as unable to succeed, the women have gained confidence and self-respect. Some women have gone on to run for government offices. Others have formed official women’s associations to help others.

Together, PWS&D, IMU and the dedicated women taking part in this program are working to bring about peace, justice and equality for all. “We have a vision. We will keep working to make it happen.”



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Fifth Sunday in Lent

Leader: On this fifth Sunday in Lent, we continue our Lenten journey of self discovery.

People: Today, we recognize that God gave his best when he gave us Jesus, and that as followers of the risen Christ, we have an obligation to give our best too.

Leader: We also recognize that God has gifted each of us in various ways: materially, financially, emotionally and spiritually.

People: In each of these areas God expects us to give of ourselves—and to give generously.

Leader: But giving generously, as God does, often requires intentional effort on our part.

People: As those made in the image of the living God, we know we should give, we know we can give, and so we will give, God being our helper.

Leader: As we give ourselves to the work of the Lord—and to each other, God will be glorified. Let us pray.

Prayer: Giving God, we thank you for our many blessings and for your great generosity to us all. In the living of our lives, help us to be generous too: of our time, of our abilities and of our resources. In all our ventures, enable us to focus more upon accumulating eternal heavenly treasure—rather than temporary earthly possessions. This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.



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Healthy Futures in India

Kheda'Khal is a small village in rural India with fewer than 500 people. It is just one of many remote, isolated villages where families are unable to access proper healthcare. Often the distance to the closest hospital is over 25km away and they must walk to get there. Many do not understand what symptoms require medical attention and often the healthcare services come from a visit to the local witch doctor.

Working with the Church of North India, PWS&D is helping build new healthy futures. The program teaches community health volunteers (CHVs) new skills to share with their village. The training includes vital subjects such as how to prevent illness, clean water and sanitation, literacy training, how to combat malnutrition and work with local hospitals. The CHVs also learn how to help their villages access government programs that they did not know existed.

When Meena was bitten by a dog, she was unsure what to do. The local CHV, Ranu, was able to identify that the dog had rabies and explained that it was important for Meena to go to the hospital. Meena received the necessary treatment and when the dog later passed away she realized Ranu had helped save her life.

In another community, residents were provided with seeds from a government program, thanks to the work of the CHV. Since most people in the area are illiterate, they were unaware there was a program to help small farmers. The CHV was able to explain the requirements and help fill in the necessary paperwork to get the seeds as well as provide technical support to diversify their harvest.

PWS&D's work with program partners in India's remote villages is helping change the future. The health of entire communities is improving and real opportunities for the future now exist.

Your regular support of PWS&D will help bring healthier futures to people in India. Contact PWS&D today to learn more and join the fight against poverty.



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Palm/Passion Sunday

Leader: On this final Sunday in Lent, we come to the end of our journey of self discovery.

People: Today, we remember what we've realized about ourselves during this time of Lent.

Leader: And what have we realized?

People: We've realized that every one of us is a dearly loved child of the Most High; that it is God who provides fully for us—in this world and the next; that our salvation is achieved through faith in Christ alone; and that we need to be generous in all aspects of our lives.

Leader: Is that all we have realized?

People: We have also realized that in this ever changing world, we must continue to struggle with what it means to be a faithful follower of Jesus Christ each and every day of our lives.

Leader: Then this journey has been fruitful. We recognize our true identity and we have clarified some of God's will for our lives. Now let us joyfully live our lives to the glory of God in concert with these new understandings. Let us pray.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for these Lenten revelations of who and whose we truly are. We thank you also for the knowledge of what you expect of us as we seek to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. We know it won't always be easy. In fact, sometimes it will be a real struggle—and in our own strength we know we'll never succeed. So help us to trust in you and to rely upon you for the faithful living of our days. This we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.



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Supporting Small Businesses in Mozambique

Mariamo Mussa struggled for years trying to take care of her family by selling food at a small outdoor stand in the market. But between the school fees for five children and the day-to-day expenses she encountered, it was difficult to get by.

PWS&D works with small business owners like Mariamo in Mozambique, through the Caixa das Mulheres. The program provides loans for women who would otherwise not have access to credit to start or expand small businesses. Run by women, for women, the Caixa model has been recognized as one of the most promising micro-finance institutions in the country.

Mariamo took out a small loan from Caixa to purchase a freezer for her fish business. This immediately helped her generate new customers. She was also able to use the capital to build a permanent storefront. Like many other entrepreneurial women involved with Caixa, she paid back her loans in full and took out bigger loans to add new opportunities for income. She now sells clothing and jewellery, diversifying her business and reducing the risks associated with dependence on only one business. With the income she earns, Mariamo can support her five children and they are all able to attend school.

Mariamo's story is just one of many successes with the Caixa das Mulheres de Nampula in Mozambique. The Caixa is one of the few financial institutions in the country that is member owned and driven. In light of the traditional attitudes toward women in the region, the accomplishments of Caixa are particularly remarkable.



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Easter Sunday

Leader: Our Lenten Journey now brings us to a time of wonderful celebration.

People: The journey has been difficult at times, but the end result is worth it.

Leader: Now, on this Easter morn, we joyously declare and celebrate that Christ is risen from the dead!

People: He is risen indeed!

Leader: The tomb that was found empty is still empty and the risen Christ lives and reigns forevermore!

People: Alleluia!

Leader: And because he lives, we too shall live. Let us pray.

Prayer: Loving and gracious Father, we praise you for loving each of us so much that you sent Jesus to live amongst us pointing the way to you; that he died upon the cross to pay the penalty for our sin; and that he rose victorious from the grave. Because he lives, we know that we too will live with you forever. Secure in this knowledge, now let us live out our lives faithfully, joyously and lovingly through the power of your Holy Spirit. This we boldly ask in Jesus' powerful name—and for your ultimate glory. Amen.



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Photo: Evans McGowan, ACT



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Christ is Risen!

Presbyterian World Service & Development is the development and relief agency of The Presbyterian Church in Canada. We work with international partners to share Christ's love and hope.

During this Easter season, we remember our brothers and sisters around the world.

With your generous support, PWS&D:

- ◆ fights poverty through education, healthcare and income generating projects,
- ◆ rebuilds homes after floods and natural disasters,
- ◆ constructs wells to provide safe, clean water,
- ◆ teaches farmers new skills to help increase their crop yields,
- ◆ responds to emergency situations with food, housing and medical supplies,
- ◆ helps refugees start new lives in Canada,
- ◆ cares for people living with or affected by HIV and AIDS.

Every day that we journey with the poor, the hopeless and the displaced, we discover God's resurrecting power: the neglected receive care, the sick are healed and the poor are raised up.

Please continue with us in this work.

Dianne Ollerenshaw, PWS&D Convenor



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