

CLWR Sunday 2011

Celebrating Partnerships

Introduction

On September 18, 2011, ELCIC congregations across Canada will join together in celebrating the church's international humanitarian work among the poor and marginalized that is undertaken by Canadian Lutheran World Relief. The theme "Celebrating Partnerships" highlights the effective way CLWR and the ELCIC work together to be in mission for others.

Much of CLWR's international community development work is carried out through partnerships with the Lutheran World Federation and the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. As Christians we acknowledge that we do not undertake this work alone, but rather as human instruments active in God's divine plan for a redeemed creation.

As a Lutheran in Canada you share in an incredible legacy of caring. For more than 65 years, you have helped communities build capacity for sustainable development by providing access to safe water, basic health care services and education. The impact of your care is far-reaching: from people in refugee camps receiving We Care kits and quilts to young Palestinians receiving vocational training, to farmers in Zambia benefiting from a new-found knowledge of sustainable agricultural practices.

We hope these resources will inspire you in worship, education and further involvement with CLWR's project work overseas. Your support allows us to do more.

Note: While congregations throughout the ELCIC are being encouraged to join together on September 18, 2011, to mark this occasion, you may choose any Sunday throughout the year to do so.

Music Suggestions

Unless otherwise indicated, hymn selections are taken from *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, and reflect the call to witness God's greatness experienced in generous grace and mercy.

- 669 **Rise Up, O Saints of God!**
- 765 **Lord of All Hopefulness**
- 763 **My Life Flows On in Endless Song**
- 484 **You Satisfy the Hungry Heart**
- 587 **There's a Wideness in God's Mercy**
- 835 **All Creatures, Worship God Most High!**
- 856 **How Great Thou Art**
- 538 **The Lord Now Sends Us Forth**
- W&P 13 **Awesome God** (*Worship and Praise*)
- TFF 187 **Freely, Freely** (*This Far by Faith*)



Photo: W. Kroeker

Reflecting on the Word

Appointed readings from the Revised Common Lectionary for Time after Pentecost—Lectionary 25 (Proper 20), 14th Sunday after Pentecost

Jonah 3:10—4:11

Jonah and The Rotting Worm:

- In the book of Jonah, God's call for repentance is communicated in narrative prose rather than prophetic oracles, and its message is as didactic for the prophet as it is for its audience. Jonah highlights God's mercy as opposed to divine wrath, saying, "I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love" (vs. 2b) and emphasizes the catholic/universal depth and breadth of God's loving redemption and forgiveness.
- For what seem like such unreal events, Jonah first being swallowed by a giant fish and then later so tormented by a little worm, they are very real illustrations and reminders that the mission to which we are called is ultimately always God's mission. Despite his reluctance and self-righteous bigotry, Jonah is upheld in the mission of God, whose redeeming and sustaining love can be surprising and/or challenging to both the faithful and the disobedient.
- Is the prophetic call to love and forgive the other too offensive, too challenging, or straying too far from the faith and heritage of Lutherans today? If so, is that something we can even admit or identify? How can the depth and breadth of God's love, as conveyed in this pericope, encompass everyone and all creation, including even one's enemy... and their animals?

Reflecting on the Word (continued)

Psalm 145:1-8

Good Gracious God

- Psalm 145 describes the greatness, the wonder and the glory of God. There's not much to say besides "PRAISE GOD"...it is unavoidable in this pericope. Why such fanfare? It's not simply because God is sovereign... but more so it is the nature of God's sovereignty, abounding in grace, mercy and steadfast love.
- It is through God's grace, mercy and steadfast love that the ministry of CLWR thrives. As the Spirit calls, gathers and enlightens us ordinary people, extraordinary ministry occurs: building more sustainable communities and economies, and providing access to the safety, justice and dignity we all expect for our common human family. Gifted by this one Holy Spirit, we can't help but all become missionaries and purveyors of God's mighty acts.
- How does your local church community join its voice together with the world's in singing God's praise and celebrating God's mercy... being "slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love" (vs. 8b)? How can praise and worship extend beyond the walls of your church communities and into the lives of the needy?

Philippians 1:21-30

Progress and Joy in Faith

- The context, or better, the *Sitz im Leben* of Paul's letter to the Philippians includes great uncertainty. Writing from prison, Paul does not know whether he will live or die, if he will be freed, or if he will be reunited with his friends in Philippi. Yet, despite such uncertainty, what remains constant is his joy in serving the gospel/good news of Christ. Paul writes as a role model, living courageously in Christ's self-emptying love, and from this radically missional perspective, the outcome of his incarceration is irrelevant.
- Progress and joy for CLWR sees you, faithful member congregations, "striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, and are in no way intimidated by your opponents" (vs. 27-28a) such as economic stress and injustice, political oppression or natural disaster.
- Consider how Paul's kenosis in mission for others can highlight and further inspire your congregation's place in God's mission.

Reflecting on the Word (continued)

Matthew 20:1-16

A Master of the House

- Today's gospel reading gives us pastors a wonderful opportunity to be "Greeky." "The landowner" most likely representing God in this parable is initially written *oikodespotā* (vs. 1). Translated, this implies: the master and organizer of the whole household/farmland. From the Greek *oikos* we also have the words "economy" and "ecology." Therefore, what is presented in this parable is God's reordering of economy and ecology in contrast to our own economic standard of greed and ecological standard of exploitation.
- A just (not to be confused with fair) distribution of resources parallels God's faithful generosity for all creation. Bearing that in mind, only four cents of every dollar donated to CLWR goes to its administration costs.
- CLWR serves faithfully as an *oikodespotā* in God's mission, striving to reverse what is unjust in the economy and ecology of today. Are there creative opportunities for your preaching to celebrate the efforts of CLWR and those from your congregation or community who serve God's ordering in the "kingdom" here, today?



Photo: E. Peters

Stories from the field

You may wish to include some examples of the work CLWR is doing overseas in your Sunday homily. A brief description of a project in Zambia is found below. Additional narratives and highlights of CLWR's work are available from the 2009-10 Annual Report. You may also find helpful the archive of feature stories available on the CLWR website, as well as stories found in past issues of *Partnership*. Please visit www.clwr.org to access any of these resources.

Improving Food Security in Katete District, Zambia

For most Canadians, food security is hardly given a second thought. A trip to the supermarket is all it takes to replenish our refrigerators and pantries. Such is not the case for many people in Katete District in Eastern Zambia. Most farms are small-scale operations that barely produce enough food to feed those working the land from one growing season to the next.

A significant underlying cause of food insecurity is land degradation due to unsustainable agriculture practices. CLWR is addressing this issue through its support for the Rural Community Development and Empowerment (RCDE) Project. Initiated by the Lutheran World Federation, the RCDE is bringing knowledge in sustainable agriculture techniques to farmers like Rosemary Phiri, her husband Juvenalisi Sakala and their five children.

Specifically, the project promotes soil and water conservation techniques through training in techniques such as basin making technology, crop rotation, use of organic manure, cover crops, and anti-erosion structures. In addition, the project is helping to foster local production of maize seed, cassava cuttings and sweet potato vines.

In October 2009, Rosemary participated in training sessions in sustainable agriculture offered through the RCDE project. Aside from training, the program provided her with a five-kilo bag of maize seed. She and her family are now applying new-found knowledge about basin making and the benefits of using manure collected from livestock pens (locally known as kraals) as a fertilizer for a small field of 1,250 square meters. The expectation is that yields will increase by more than 50 percent over previous years and that new farming practices will expand to neighbouring fields.

For Rosemary and her family, and others in the district, the RCDE program is providing a means for people to grow enough food to sustain themselves from one growing season to the next.



Photo: E. Oduro

Intercessory Prayers

Seeking God's order of generous grace and love, let us pray for the church, those in need and for all of God's creation.

Oh sovereign God, you gather us as your church and call us into your mission for others. Guide all our bishops, pastors and people according to your steadfast love and forgive us our sins.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Great Lord, your grace is beyond measure and your love includes all creation. Bless us all whom you hold in good stewardship ministry toward your earth and one another and forgive us our sins.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Mighty God, help each of us to sustain the work of agencies like CLWR and peacemakers like Dag Hammarskjöld, whom we commemorate today, that we may share the blessings of living in self-giving love and forgive us when we fall short.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Majestic God, open the eyes of all of us who struggle to see your glory in the light of our own successes or in the shadows of our own failures. Restore our faith that we may receive your gifts and share them wisely with others, and forgive us when we are selfishly nearsighted.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

God of awesome deeds, heal us who are angry, fearful, lonely and failing in health, especially... Give us the strength to sing your praise with hope and renewal, and forgive us when we are weak in faith.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Righteous God, gather us with all your saints who have gone before us, and free us in your ways of grace and mercy. Strengthen us in your mission to call others to your table, to your feast and to the celebration that has no end, and forgive us our sins.

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Merciful redeemer, into your hands we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your abundant mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour, **Amen.**

Suggested Activities

- Show the new CLWR video prior to, as part of or following a worship service. Copies of the video were distributed to delegates at the LCC Synod Conventions.
- Host an international potluck after worship—invite your members to bring dishes from different countries around the world.
- Embark on a One Community project with your congregation. Learn about how your gifts can build a sustainable future for a community overseas. See the Resources section of the CLWR website (www.clwr.org) to download a One Community resource package.
- Encourage each family in your congregation to assemble a We Care kit for a person in need overseas. Details can be downloaded from www.clwr.org/WeCare.
- Invite a special guest to share their encounters with the work of CLWR and the church's mission work overseas. These people could be participants in CLWR's Global Encounters, refugees who have been supported by your congregation when they arrived in Canada, people who have served with Volunteers in Mission, or CLWR and church resource people.
- Encourage congregational members to stay informed about the work of CLWR by following CLWR on Facebook or by subscribing to our electronic News Briefs.
- Include CLWR's work in your prayers throughout the year.

Other Resources

- Visit the CLWR website (www.clwr.org) to access the latest Annual Report and copies of past issues of *Partnership* newsletter. Both are excellent ways to learn about the ongoing work of CLWR.
- CLWR pew envelopes are available on request. Please contact us by email (clwr@clwr.mb.ca) or phone (1.800.661.2597)
- CLWR maintains a channel on YouTube (<http://www.youtube.com/user/CLWRvideo>) where you can find a library of short videos highlighting the work of CLWR.

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