

Saturday, October 16th is World Food Day – created by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) to commemorate its founding in Quebec City, October 16, 1945. The goal of the FAO is to free humanity from hunger and malnutrition, and to effectively manage the global food system. World Food Day events are organized in over 150 countries across the world, making it one of the most celebrated days of the UN calendar. These events promote worldwide awareness and action for those who suffer from hunger and help strengthen the link between agriculture and food security.

Our service today offers thanksgiving for the abundance we enjoy and draws attention to the hunger experienced by many in the world. I have used resources from Canadian Foodgrains Bank. We have been focusing on food security in our fundraising for the *Ride for Refuge* that Team PWS&D Victoria participated in last week. Here is an excerpt from a letter of thanks we received from Guy Smagghe, Director of PWS&D...

Through your efforts, more people in your communities have become aware of the needs in the world and of the work that PWS&D does to bring about a more sustainable, compassionate and just world. This is exactly what Jesus was referring to when he asked us to love our neighbour.

Unfortunately, hunger in the world has worsened since the pandemic began and we need to work harder to turn the tide. Funds raised this year will help us to respond in places of great need such as Yemen, Syria, Haiti, Malawi and Afghanistan, to name a few. Donations will be matched up to four times at Canadian Foodgrains Bank, thereby multiplying the impact of your efforts.

We will also support food security projects aimed at establishing sustainable agricultural practices so that farmers, both men and women, are able to get more out of the limited land resources available to them. It is through our collective efforts that we can make a difference...

All people should have regular access to enough nutritious food to live healthy and active lives. In addition to our service today, I have shared some stories and information as well as an invitation to use your voice to advocate on behalf of our global neighbours in need. May our worship nurture us and support these efforts for justice in the world.

Welcome and Land Acknowledgement

We recognize that the land where we gather for worship belongs to God, as does all of creation, and that the Lkwungen people – the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ – have lived on this land since before settlers of European descent claimed ownership and displaced those for whom it was home.

As we pursue our goals to dismantle racism and attend to growing diversity, we lament this injustice in our history and commit ourselves to just and respectful relationships within our congregation and our neighborhood.

➤ ***Dance with the Spirit***

MV 156 (repeat)

Call to Worship

God blesses us with gifts of love – with relationships that bring joy and gratitude.

God blesses us with talents and opportunities to serve – all we need for faithful living.

God protects us in times of danger and guards us from the time of trial.

So, we gather to offer thanksgiving to the Lord our God.

Praise be to God for all good things, now and always! Let us pray...

† Gathering Prayer – *written by the Rev. Dr. Kristina Lizardy-Hajbi (adapted)*

Holy Dwelling Place, your tent is wide enough to provide shelter and safety for all who seek you – abundant food for all who hunger – hope and healing for all who suffer and despair. Meet us here today, and fill us with confidence in your presence, that we may risk sharing Jesus' cup and his baptism so the world may become the place of love and justice you desire for all. Shelter us with your light and clothe us with your heavenly garments. Teach us how we may best serve ourselves and one another as we journey together. Amen

† Prayer of Confession and Renewal – *adapted from World Council of Churches, Prayers to Overcome Hunger*

O Lord, we are part of a society that diminishes those living in poverty – a system that undervalues their voices, stories and traditional knowledge – appropriates their lands, water, farms and resources for the comfort of those who already have enough.

Forgive us O God – help us to stand with the oppressed and overcome greed and injustice.

Holy One, we are part of a society that fails to acknowledge that hundreds of millions of people in the world today are hungry and impoverished, in the midst of unequally available wealth and plenty.

Forgive us O God for our willful ignorance – help us to be receptive and responsive to the needs of others, whether near or far. Ignite within us a desire to learn from, and to share our resources with those who are hungry and in need.

We are part of a society that perpetuates, tolerates and contributes to violence, conflicts and insecurity. Crises that bring hunger and untold suffering to millions of children, girls, women, and men who are experiencing violations of their rights and violence daily.

Forgive us O God for our ignorance, complicity, and inaction. Help us to be diligent in our curiosity to learn from others. Grant us persistence in striving for peace and justice and to end violence.

We are part of a society that wastes much of the food being produced. A society that is increasingly focused inward – wasteful and careless – polluting and destroying the environment and contributing to climate change.

Forgive us O God for our wastefulness, greed and lack of regard for how the generations to come might live. Reveal to us the impacts of our daily choices and inaction on those made vulnerable by poverty, hunger and injustice. Gift to us the grace needed to grow deeper in our respect of, and care for your creation.

Help us to give our lives in offering – for hope in times of despair – as a catalyst for change.

Words of Hope – adapted from a prayer written by Rev. Mindi, posted on the Rev-o-lution blog. <http://rev-o-lution.org>

Know that Jesus, came to us not to reign as a king over us, but to serve – to sit at the table with us and to show us that the way of God is the way of love. This same Jesus hears our prayers and forgives us. We go on, knowing we are forgiven – with lifted heads and bowed hearts – ready and willing to love creation and serve our neighbour who hungers for food, justice and peace. Amen

➤ *Sing a new song unto the Lord*

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Signs of Hope

Psalm 33: 18-22

Truly the eye of the Lord is on those who fear God, on those who hope in God's steadfast love, to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.

Our soul waits for the Lord who is our help and shield.

Our heart is glad in God because we trust in God's holy name.

Let your steadfast love, O Lord, be upon us, even as we hope in you.

Reflection... These verses from Psalm 33 talk about how God's eye is on those who serve others and put their hope in God's tremendous love for us.

I wonder...
• What IS hope?
• Why do we need hope?
• What gives you hope?

Sometimes we can feel overwhelmed or afraid because of all the bad things going on in the world, or in our own lives. The next time you start to feel overwhelmed by the bigness of the suffering and needs of everyone in our world, find something small from nature: a leaf, a pinecone, a seed, a flower, a bud, a stone, or even a simple bowl of water. You are looking for a tiny but significant sign of hope, anything that can serve as little reminder of God's promise to us, especially when things feel heavy or confusing.

Think about the signs of hope you have seen in the world lately as we look at these few slides and I ensure that everyone worshipping in person received a tiny but significant sign as a reminder of God's promise.

Look closely at the object you have received or concentrate fully on the sign of hope you brought to mind – notice any tiny details.

- Does it have a smell? Does it make a sound?
- What does it feel like to touch?
- How is it connected to other things in the web of creation?
- What could happen if I put it into the ground?
- What thoughts or feelings do you have in the moment?

Spending time looking carefully at creation and the wonder of nature can help us feel connected to God's goodness and love. Like a tiny seed needs water, sunlight and good soil to grow into a flower and bear fruit, we need to look carefully for signs of God's movement in our world because those signs help nourish us as we grow our hope and belief in God who brings light out of darkness and hope from hopelessness.

† Prayer

God of Hope, help us to trust you with our worries, fears and needs. Inspire us all to listen, look and learn with joy, and to serve you by being good neighbours to each other and wise stewards of creation. May your steadfast love, O God, be upon us, even as we hope in you. We pray in the name of the one who came not to be served, but to serve others, in Jesus' name. Amen

➤ *When God restored our common life*

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Don't Worry – Hope and Trust

Matthew 6: 25-34

Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these.

But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you – you of little faith? Therefore, do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed, your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.

Reflection...

- I wonder if you worry about your life.
- What are your worries – your troubles?
- Have you placed those burdens at God's feet in prayer?
- Do you have enough trouble for today? What does that mean to you?

There was a time in my life when I was filled with worry – unsure about finances and family and what I was doing with my life. I forgot that God was with me in all circumstances. It was a time when I was filled with anxiety about everything – things I might be able to do something about and things that were clearly beyond my control. And just when despair was threatening to overwhelm me, I was given a bookmark during a special worship service. It was white card stock with an origami bird in colourful paper glued near the top. There was delicate Japanese script written on the card and a Bible reference – *Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink or about your body, what you will wear* – part of today's reading from Matthew's gospel.

That bookmark – that verse – became a sign of hope for me at a very difficult time. God was reaching out through this simple gesture to restore hope – to lift me from the mire of worry and doubt. I remembered that I was not alone – that God was with me and would care for me. I could hope and trust despite all the difficulties and issues of my present circumstance. Hope in that moment and in the promises of God for the future was the conviction that I did not need to worry about my life – that then, as now, God knows what I need.

God knows what each one of us needs. God is with us in the midst of our concerns and problems. We can trust that God has not forgotten or abandoned us – no matter how difficult things seem to be. Today's trouble is enough for today.

What Jesus teaches is that if the birds of the air and the flowers of the field – who know nothing of purposeful work – manage to survive and thrive, then what is the source of our pervasive insecurity? Why are we scurrying around like ants to hoard whatever we can, oblivious to the abundant creation all around us? Why are we keeping so much for ourselves rather than sharing with those in need?

As we celebrate the abundant harvest of thanksgiving may we remember and continue to seek justice for those who struggle to feed themselves and their families. Give thanks with joy and humility – don't worry, instead hope and trust that you have enough – you **are** enough – and you have much to offer to make a difference in our broken world.

➤ *Nothing can trouble*

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† Offering and Prayer

At this time of harvest, we celebrate the gifts of God's good earth which sustain us. Yet this year we know in some places, harvests will not be plentiful. In every community, neighbours still struggle to recover from what has been lost during the pandemic. So today we offer what we have to share, grateful for God's gifts large and small, praying they will make a difference in difficult times, trusting that God goes with us, whatever we face.

➤ *Praise God from whom all blessings flow*

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Generous God, we bring our offering with thanksgiving for all the goodness we enjoy in Christ and in creation. Bless these gifts and use them to relieve the need and anxiety many feel these days. Use us, too, so that lives filled with tears may see signs of your love and joy in what we can offer in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen

† Pastoral Prayers and the Lord's Prayer – *adapted from a prayer by The Rev. David Beckmann, Lutheran pastor & president of Bread for the World in Prayers for the New Social Awakening by Christian Iosso & Elizabeth Hinson-Hasty*

God of righteous bounty, we are moved by your grace to work for justice. We know that you hear the prayer of the parent whose child is crying for food. We know that you hear the prayer of the farmer who is trying to make ends meet to feed their family. Be a balm to them, O God, and give them strength as they work to better their lives.

We pray for all those who grow food, all those who gather, hunt, fish and harvest. Help them as they struggle to adapt to the changing climate, as they wait for rain, not knowing when or if it will come. Journey with those have been forced to flee their farms and homelands in search of safety or a better life.

We pray for all heads of governments, religious leaders, politicians, fighters and citizens who are facing war and civil conflict. Give them new life through faithful diplomacy, determined mediation and courageous peacemaking. May they be united by your Spirit of wisdom and grace, to work for healing, recovery, and lasting peace.

We pray for the leaders of our own nation – the decision makers who can support work for peace and reconciliation – who redirect millions of dollars of help and opportunity with the stroke of a pen. Attune their ears to hear the cries of hungry people. Give our leaders the courage, the vision, and the wisdom to make possible a world where all are fed.

Thank you, loving God, for guiding us to be good global neighbours and stewards – for teaching us to turn our faith into action – for amplifying our many voices when we speak truth to power. Thank you that when we speak out for those facing hunger, the miracle of the loaves and fishes happens again and again. We believe that you are moving in our time to end hunger, and we are grateful that you include us as a part of this great liberation. We pray in the name of Jesus Christ, who still feeds the multitude and who encourages us to pray together **...Our Father, who art in heaven – hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come – thy will be done – on**

earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen

➤ *We cannot own the sunlit sky*

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Benediction – adapted from World Council of Churches, Prayers to overcome hunger

May we always be hungry for justice - may we overcome systems that bring about vulnerability to hunger. May we always be thirsty for peace – near and far. May we overcome insecurity, suffering and displacement! May we always yearn to care urgently for each other and God’s Creation. May we learn to better share each other’s burdens and may our prayers lead us to wisdom in action and transformation! Go now in the grace and peace of Christ. Amen

➤ *Go now in peace, never be afraid*

