

FIRST SUNDAY IN ADVENT: HOPE

One: Advent is a time of waiting.

Isaiah 64:1-9

All: God's hope comes to those who wait in longing anticipation.

One: We wait for you, O God, who is our hope. O that you would tear open the heavens and come down so that the mountains would quake at your presence, as when you did awesome deeds that we did not expect. (Isaiah 64:1, 3)

All: God's hope comes to those who wait in longing anticipation.

One: We seek hope for our world: hope for those of us who long for food, water and shelter; hope for those of us who long for friendship, meaningful relationships and a vibrant faith community; hope for those of us who long for meaning in life, caught up in a struggle with despair.

All: God's hope comes to those who wait in longing anticipation.

One: As we light the candle of hope, let us remember that God is the God of Hope. Let us remember God's awesome deeds that brought light out of darkness, life from death, a Messiah from among us. Let us anticipate God's awesome future when all will be one and all will be well. Let us open ourselves to God's awesome presence with us here, even now.

The candle of hope is lit.

Unison Prayer: O Holy One, the source and end of our hope. Open us to your quaking and quiet presence this hour. As a candle that burns in the darkness, rekindle our hope in you and your vision of the world renewed where there is no more hunger or despair, no more tears or fighting. Inspire us to acts of hope in Jesus' name, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Written by Pamela McCarroll, Assistant Professor of Pastoral Theology, Knox College

Produced by Presbyterian World Service & Development

The development and relief agency of The Presbyterian Church in Canada

50 Wynford Drive, Toronto ON M3C 1J7 * 1-800-619-7301 * www.presbyterian.ca/pwsd

COMING IN FROM THE COLD IN PAKISTAN

Janirsat and her family have a new home. After living in Pakistan's northern mountains for weeks while waiting for floodwaters to recede, Janirsat returned to the plot where her house once stood, empty-handed and hopeless. Her 10 cows and 40 goats had been swept away — an immense loss to the family that used to live off the milk and meat.

With the help of PWS&D and other members of the Action by Churches Together (ACT) Alliance, Janirsat's family received a tent to provide her family with some immediate shelter, as well as construction materials to help them rebuild their home. They moved into the new, three-room concrete house just as winter settled in.

Janirsat and her family quickly experienced a marked improvement in their health and they are all extremely grateful for the help they received. They can now begin to rebuild their lives.

Winter is upon us again. As we remember how there was no suitable home available for Mary to give birth to Christ, this Advent season you can help turn hopes for shelter, food and health care into reality for people affected by floods and other disasters. www.presbyterian.ca/pwsd

PWS&D is a member of the ACT Alliance, a global network of churches responding to disaster and emergency situations around the world.



SECOND SUNDAY IN ADVENT: PEACE

Isaiah 40:1-11

One: Advent is a time of waiting.

All: God's peace comes to those who wait upon God.

One: See, the Lord God comes... God will feed the flock like a shepherd and will gather the lambs in his arms and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the flock. (Isaiah 40:10a, 11)

All: God's peace comes to those who wait upon God.

One: We seek God's peace for the world: peace for those of us caught up in violent conflicts, the displaced, the vulnerable; peace for those of us caught within relationships that tear down rather than build up; peace for those of us caught in mental anguish, grief, and depression.

All: God's peace comes to those who wait upon God.

One: As we light the candle of peace, let us remember that God is the God of Peace. Let us remember God's peace in Jesus, the mediator in whom all fullness is found. Let us anticipate God's promise of peace throughout the earth. Let us open ourselves to God's peace, coming as the embrace of a shepherd gently caring for all.

The candle of peace is lit.

Unison Prayer: O Holy One, you whose peace surpasses all understanding. Open us to your deep and abiding presence this hour. As a candle burning in the darkness, rekindle a vision of your peace for the world — where there will be no more wars and torture, no more tears and anguish. Inspire us to acts of peace in Jesus' name, in whose name we pray. Amen.

A CHANCE FOR CHILDREN IN AFGHANISTAN

It's not easy being a teacher in Afghanistan. In a country with a youth literacy rate of only 34%, and despite having one of the highest proportions of school-age children in the world, teachers face a real challenge in educating their communities on the importance of keeping children in school.

Since a PWS&D partner began working in the area, head teacher Mohammad has seen a substantial increase in the number of children attending his school. Students receive textbooks and supplies to reduce the costs for families, and program staff raise awareness in the community of the importance of education.

In order to improve the quality of instruction being offered, teachers receive training on topics including child-centered teaching, children's rights, child psychology and peace education.

Mohammad is thrilled to see how the school has been a positive influence on the lives of so many and that attitudes towards keeping children in school are changing. With a big smile, he explains, "Today, our school boasts of 436 girls and 457 boys!"

This Advent season, you can help children around the world build brighter and more peaceful futures through support of PWS&D. www.presbyterian.ca/pwsd

THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT: JOY

One: Advent is a time of waiting.

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

All: God's joy comes to those who wait with eager anticipation.

One: The vision of joy given us in Isaiah is a vision of God's deliverance that brings good news to the oppressed, binds up the brokenhearted, proclaims liberty to the captives and release of the prisoners, that comforts all who mourn. (Isaiah 61:1-2)

All: God's joy comes to those who wait with eager anticipation.

One: We come today seeking joy for the world. We long for joy in situations where poverty and injustice, suffering and abuse block God's possibility from flourishing among us. We long for joy in situations where boredom and fear stunt growth and block us from seeing God's promised deliverance.

All: God's joy comes to those who wait with eager anticipation.

One: As we light the candle of joy, let us remember that God is the God of Joy. Let us remember God's joyful deliverance that has come in Jesus, the Word made flesh. Let us anticipate God's promise of deliverance with abundant joy throughout the earth. Let us open ourselves to God's joy that seeks to deliver us from all that weighs us down, even here, even now.

The candle of joy is lit.

Unison Prayer: Gracious God of joy, find us and move within us this hour. As a candle that burns in the darkness, rekindle within us your vision of joyful deliverance where mourning, suffering and injustice will be no more. Release us from all that imprisons us. Inspire us to acts of joy in Jesus' name, in whose name we pray. Amen.

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OVERJOYED WITH SUCCESS IN GHANA

Isaac Bukari's face can hardly contain his beaming his smile. For many years, Isaac suffered discrimination and neglect from his family and community in Ghana due to his epilepsy, where it is traditionally attributed to evil spirits. After years in isolation, a PWS&D partner noticed Isaac's situation and provided him with medication that dramatically reduced his seizures.

Isaac was promptly enrolled in a PWS&D-supported vocational training centre, where he excelled at weaving, dyeing fabrics and making soap. While there, he also demonstrated strong leadership and literacy skills.

During graduation ceremonies, Isaac was recognized as the top student, and received a new wooden loom and weaving materials to start his own business. Filled with joy and gratitude, Isaac says his life is now "fruitful and productive." Today, Isaac runs a successful weaving business from his home and occasionally visits the training centre to teach new students how to follow in his footsteps.

This Advent season, you can help young people like Isaac get a new start on life through support of PWS&D.

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FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT: LOVE

One: Advent is a time of waiting. *Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26*

All: God's love comes to those who look for it in anticipation and trust.

One: Joining with the Psalmist, we sing of God's steadfast love forever; with our mouths we declare God's faithfulness to all generations. Let us declare that God's steadfast love is established forever. God's faithfulness is as firm as the heavens. (Psalm 89:1-2)

All: God's love comes to those who look for it in anticipation and trust.

One: We come today seeking God's transforming love for the world. We long for the time when the overflowing generosity of love has its way in the world: where powers of injustice and violence are toppled by the irresistible power of love; where oppressive relationships are re-ordered by the law of love; where each creature is known as the beloved of God.

All: God's love comes to those who look for it in anticipation and trust.

One: As we light the candle of love, let us remember that God is the God of Love. Let us remember that God's love has come in Jesus, God-with-us. Let us anticipate the fullness of love's reign throughout the earth. Let us open ourselves to the ways God's love embraces us and seeks us out this hour.

The candle of love is lit.

Unison Prayer: O gracious God of love, find us and hold us close this hour. As a candle that burns in the darkness, rekindle within us the fire of love — love that opens us to you, to each other and to the world in generosity, compassion and kindness. Inspire us to acts of love in Jesus' name, in whose name we pray. Amen.

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LEARNING TO SMILE AGAIN IN NICARAGUA

Four years ago, Miriam Martinez was struggling to support her three children with meagre wages while working long hours in a clothing factory in an impoverished urban community in Nicaragua. Looking back, Miriam says her long workday sacrificed the health of herself and her children — and she was desperate for change.

With help from a PWS&D-supported program, Miriam learned about the importance of proper nutrition and received vitamin supplements for her children. She quit her factory job to spend more time with her family and made ends meet by helping out at the program's nursery and starting a home tailoring business. She soon began training other young mothers about the importance of nutrition and early childhood development.

"I now live a completely different life," Miriam says proudly. "I have overcome health problems that I had, I dedicate a lot of time to my children, I have a source of income, and I have improved my eating habits. I assure you there are many more women like myself. We are learning to smile again."

This Advent season, you can help women like Miriam build healthier and brighter futures for themselves and their families through support of PWS&D. www.presbyterian.ca/pwsd

This program is supported in partnership with Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB), a coalition of 15 church-based agencies responding to global hunger.



CHRISTMAS EVE/DAY

One: Advent is a time of waiting.

All: Arise and shine for our light has come. The glory of God is revealed. The time of waiting is over.

One: Even amidst all that is wrong with the world, together we proclaim that the fullness of God has come in Jesus. Our Saviour is born. Amidst the poor and the needy, our Saviour is born. Amidst refugees and outcasts, our Saviour is born.

Amidst injustice and oppression, our Saviour is born.

All: Arise and shine for our light has come. The glory of God is revealed. The time of waiting is over.

One: We come together this hour ready to grab hold of the fullness of hope, peace, joy and love offered in Jesus. We come ready to grab hold of God's light in the face of darkness in the world. We come ready to celebrate and share the mystery of love that will not let us go.

All: Arise and shine for our light has come. The glory of God is revealed. The time of waiting is over.

One: As we light the Christ candle let us remember that the light of God has come in Jesus and can never be extinguished. Let us seek out the signs of God's light upon the earth. Let us open ourselves to the presence and power of Jesus within us, even here, even now.

The Christ candle is lit.

Unison Prayer: O Holy One of light, you meet us here this hour. Open us to your power and presence. As a candle that burns in darkness, rekindle our passion for your beloved world. Inspire us to acts of gratitude and celebration in the name of your beloved Son Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.

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CHRIST IS BORN!

Even in the face of poverty, injustice and disaster, hope finds a way.

For 65 years, our church has been serving people around the world through PWS&D. Together, with partners overseas and Canadians here at home, we work to restore human dignity, ease the pain of want and promote community cooperation as an expression of Christ's hope, peace, joy and love.

Thanks to your support and faith in action, we are providing people in need with education, health care, food, clean water, small loans, promoting human rights and supporting refugees. During Christmas celebrations this year, may we continue to remember our brothers and sisters around the world.

This Christmas, please support PWS&D.

PWS&D is a proud member of Canadian Churches in Action (CCA), Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB) and the ACT Alliance.

Make your donation go even further through regular, monthly donations. Call today to enrol or visit www.presbyterian.ca/pwsd/givemonthly

