

# Stories of Mission

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## LIVING FAITH





# Hope in the Midst of a Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has left millions of people worldwide in need of assistance. Presbyterian World Service & Development is helping people access food, clean water, sanitation facilities and livelihood and psychosocial support.



In Kenya, a sign on a water barrel says, “Please wash your hands with soap and water before visiting our offices.” In Malawi, socially distanced cooking demonstrations are conducted. In a refugee camp in Bangladesh, food and hygiene kits are distributed.

These are just a few of the actions that PWS&D international partners are taking to help fight the pandemic and mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on their communities. COVID-19 has been devastating to many people in developing countries where health, social and economic effects are severe.

Many developing countries lack the resources needed to fight the disease. Health care systems are fragile, or in some cases, almost nonexistent. These systems are already overburdened trying to help those seeking maternal and child health care or HIV and AIDS treatment. COVID-19 could completely overwhelm their ability to provide even basic care.

People struggle to wash their hands as often as needed where there is little access to proper

sanitation and hygiene facilities. Social distancing can be very difficult when living space is restricted in communities where large, extended families share one small home.

Lockdowns mean countless families have lost their livelihoods. Women are at greater risk of gender-based violence as they may isolate with their abusers, without access to help or support. Children have been out of school for months. The longer they are unable to attend school, girls are at risk of leaving school permanently due to early and forced marriage or unintended pregnancy.

PWS&D is working with partners overseas to help minimize these repercussions. By adapting program methodologies and providing funds to help with COVID-19 concerns, important development work is able to continue. Vital services such as mobile nutrition clinics, hospital facilities and trainings are able to operate by introducing precautionary measures. Teachers are being supported so they



can conduct distance education, learning kits are being provided for students, and families are receiving food assistance and hygiene kits.

PWS&D is also responding in Bangladesh, Somalia, South Sudan and Palestine through the ACT Alliance. In these countries, conflict and economic disruption have created large numbers of refugees, displaced people, and people living in extreme poverty. Longer-term relief projects are ensuring families have access to hygiene and sanitation facilities, as well as providing livelihoods support and psychosocial care to people struggling to cope with the effects of the pandemic.

The United Nations World Food Programme estimates 265 million people could face food insecurity due to COVID-19, and the World Bank estimates that the consequences of COVID-19 will push at least 49 million more people into extreme poverty—undoing many of the advances made in recent years. Through PWS&D, our church is providing vital support to alleviate some of the damaging effects and help families and communities recover.

## Read: Jeremiah 32:1-23

### Reflect

Jeremiah does a very strange thing. He invests in property in the midst of a siege while under house arrest. It is not a good time to buy a field but that is exactly what Jeremiah does, because he believes in God's future. He believes that even though the current situation is barren and precarious, things are going to change. Jeremiah understands that God has a plan that transcends the present moment.

COVID-19 has left no place untouched. People all around the world have lost their jobs and livelihoods, face food insecurity and are anxious about their future. When catastrophic events like a pandemic occur, many people in developing countries don't have access to government support to help mitigate the effects and provide the resources needed to recover.

With the generous support of Presbyterians across Canada, PWS&D is responding through ACT Alliance and Canadian Foodgrains Bank. We are helping families receive food assistance, access water and sanitation services, and receive counselling to ease anxiety caused by the pandemic. Like Jeremiah, we are investing in the future, based on a belief that God has new things in store for God's people.

### Discuss

- 1) What are some ways you and your congregation are supporting people in your community impacted by COVID-19?

- 2) In some ways, we are in a situation like Jeremiah. Everything feels uncertain and precarious. How does our support of church initiatives indicate an investment in God's future?
- 3) Many people around the world are very concerned about their future due to the pandemic. How have you coped with increased anxiety? What strategies did you use to lessen your anxiety?

### Sing

**635** – Brother, sister let me serve you

**723** – Lord, in this broken world

**736** – For the healing of the nations

### Pray

God of mercy,

We ask for your calming presence to surround us as we manoeuvre through anxiety and uncertainty. We pray for strength and reassurance for those who have lost their jobs and face food insecurity due to COVID-19. We pray for those whom COVID-19 has touched. As they slowly recover, we pray that they may find tranquillity and comfort in your presence. Our work is an investment in your future, Lord, believing that you have a different plan for us.

In Jesus' name we pray,  
Amen.

Respond to COVID-19 through Gifts of Change:  
[presbyterian.ca/covid-donate](https://presbyterian.ca/covid-donate)



# Mission Around the World

Through Presbyterians Sharing and Presbyterian World Service & Development, The Presbyterian Church in Canada is sharing Christ's love in 25 countries.

Gifts to Presbyterians Sharing provide grants and mission staff to encourage, equip and accompany our mission partners in areas such as Bible translation, leadership development, evangelism, outreach and Christian service.

PWS&D supports development work and provides relief in times of emergency. Inspired by God's promise of abundant life, PWS&D envisions a sustainable, compassionate and just world.

