

First Sunday in Advent: HOPE

Jeremiah 33:14

(Light the candle of hope.)

Leader: People of hope,
God desires people to remember the ancient
promises and hold fast to the vision of heaven
and earth made new.

People: **Make us those hopeful people!**

Leader: God longs for people who will not let
discouragement be the last word;
but who wait for God's Word.

People: **Make us those hopeful people!**

Leader: God yearns for people who push back against
the dark lie of hopelessness.
God's call to hope transforms the world.

People: **Make us those hopeful people!**

Leader: Let's pray together...

People: **God of yesterday, today and tomorrow,
in this season of Advent,
we hold fast to your promises
and live in hope.
Give us courage to resist
the world's anxiety.
Bring light to our path as we await the
bright dawn of your presence. Amen.**

Written by the Rev. Robert J. Murray
Produced by Presbyterian World Service & Development
50 Wynford Drive, Toronto, ON M3C 1J7
1-800-619-7301 • WeRespond.ca

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Taking the First Steps to Combat Oppression

Inequalities faced by women and girls can begin at birth and follow them all their lives.

Beatriz Miranda knows this all too well.

In her Guatemalan village, the shadow of oppression excludes indigenous women like her from pursuing careers outside of the home and becoming leaders in their communities.

PWS&D is combatting this injustice by teaching women about their rights and helping them build their self-esteem and leadership skills. With this support, women are strengthening their voices in society and creating positive change in their communities.

Beatriz, burdened by self-doubt, struggled in her role as president of a group helping to improve agricultural practices and combat hunger in her village.

But with support from PWS&D, she is flourishing as a skilled, motivated leader, confidently assisting vulnerable families as they plant vegetables, care for livestock and improve livelihoods.

“I have begun the first steps that will demonstrate to other women that we can play important roles within organizations,” shares Beatriz.

This Advent season, help lift the veil of oppression and grow more just and prosperous communities.

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Second Sunday in Advent: PEACE

Luke 1:78-79

(Light the candle of peace.)

Leader: People of peace,
God desires people who hold fast to the
vision of God's Kingdom where peace and
justice reign.

People: **Make us those peaceful people!**

Leader: God longs for people who have courage,
who examine their own motives fearlessly,
who won't abide intimidation or a bully.

People: **Make us those peaceful people!**

Leader: God yearns for people who resist the call to
vengeance, the false solution of anger, the
easy answer of hate.

People: **Make us those peaceful people!**

Leader: Let's pray together...

People: **God of peace, we hear your call to live in
peace with you
and with our neighbours.
Bring light to our path as we await your
peaceable kingdom. Amen.**

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Finding Peace in the Kindness of Others

Junayet Ahammed will never forget the day he watched his family's house burn to the ground.

It was the day the military attacked his village in Myanmar.

Since August 2017, innocent Rohingya children, families and communities in Myanmar's Rakhine state have been subject to escalating violence—torture and killings — because of their ethnicity and religion.

Over 700,000 Rohingya people, including Junayet's family, have fled to refugee camps just over the border in Bangladesh.

In Myanmar, Junayet taught high-school chemistry and worked part-time at his family's small pharmacy.

It has been difficult to adjust to life in the slum-like Kutupalong refugee camp, struggling for the basics for survival. But through the generosity of others, Junayet's family has found some peace.

"I am thankful for the different kinds of support and help we are receiving," says Junayet.

Part of this support is food rations of oil, lentils, sugar and salt provided in collaboration with members of the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

This Advent season give hope — for the future and a safe return home — for Rohingya refugees.

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Third Sunday in Advent: JOY

Isaiah 12:3-4

(Light the candle of joy.)

Leader: People of joy,
God desires people who hear and respond
with thanksgiving
to the promise of salvation.

People: **Make us those joyful people!**

Leader: God longs for people who will not wallow in
the world's sorrows,
but seek out new occasions for joy!

People: **Make us those joyful people!**

Leader: God yearns for people
who struggle past
daily discouragements
to inspire the next joyful friends of God.

People: **Make us those joyful people!**

Leader: Let's pray together...

People: **God of joy, we praise you
for including us in your
joyful communion.
Bring light to our path as we await
the King who is coming.
Amen.**

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A Joyful Pregnancy for the Whole Family

At her prenatal check-ups, first-time mom Fiskani Magawa is heartened by reports that her baby is strong and healthy.

It feels even better to share the experience with her husband Steven who has accompanied her to every appointment.

In their Malawian community, it's uncommon for husbands to join their wives at prenatal visits. Yet, when fathers-to-be are more involved, the well-being of mothers and children improves significantly.

That's why PWS&D's maternal, newborn and child health project encourages fathers to take an active role in supporting women during pregnancy, childbirth and after the baby is born.

Steven has learned why it is essential that Fiskani stays healthy during her pregnancy. He's also learned how to take care of a newborn, which he says is "the best thing about going to the appointments." The parents plan to take their newborn baby to regular visits with a health worker.

This Advent season, help give moms and babies the best chance for a healthy future by building support for maternal and child health care among families and communities.

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Fourth Sunday in Advent: LOVE

Luke 1:46-49

(Light the candle of love.)

Leader: People of love,
God desires people who are not afraid to
risk everything and respond to the
invitation of God's kingdom.

People: **Make us those loving people!**

Leader: God longs for people to overcome
prejudice and fear.
God wants bold and loving
companions on the way.

People: **Make us those loving people!**

Leader: God yearns for people who find creative
ways to invite others into loving
community.

People: **Make us those loving people!**

Leader: Let's pray together...

People: **God of love, we thank you
for the invitation to live in your love.
Bring light to our path as we await
the Lord of love.
Amen.**

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Healthy Futures Start from the Ground

Sandra Martínez couldn't understand why her sons Erling and Gerson were chronically ill and underweight.

The children were eating, but they were also suffering from the effects of malnutrition — often called hidden hunger.

In Sandra's village in Nicaragua, rates of poverty and hunger are high. Accessing nutritious food and health care is a challenge, meaning many children experience nutrient deficiencies, which can cause illness and delays in growth.

With other participants of a PWS&D project helping families improve food security and nutrition, Sandra learned that a diet rich in fresh produce is an important way to decrease malnutrition. She was able to start a vegetable garden, now brimming with plants to incorporate into nourishing recipes.

"My family's diet has improved because we have learned about the nutritional value of natural foods — those produced in the community and rich in nutrients for our bodies."

Most of all, Sandra is thankful that her boys are healthy and no longer anemic.

This Advent season, help fuel bodies and minds with nutritious food so that future generations can thrive.

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The Christ Candle

Isaiah 9:6

(Light the Christ candle.)

Leader: People of light,
God in Christ desires a heaven and earth
reconciled in a new people, a new
creation.

People: **In Christ, we are those people!**

Leader: God in Christ longs for people unafraid to
leave old ways behind
for the paths of faithfulness.

People: **In Christ, we are those people!**

Leader: God in Christ yearns for people with bold
and joyful hearts proclaiming the birth,
the death, the rising and the glory of
Christ our King!

People: **In Christ, we are those people!**

Leader: Let's pray together...

People: **Everlasting God with us,
Christ our light, Spirit our Guide,
we welcome your brightness,
we abide in hope, peace, joy and love
and look for your new kingdom on
earth. Amen.**

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Christ is Born!

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

For over 70 years, our church has been faithfully responding with Presbyterian World Service & Development to God's call to serve those in need. Together with our partners, we are making a positive difference in our global village.

Inspired by God's promise of abundant life, we are responding to hunger, poverty, injustice and disaster. We are responding to care for the poor, sick and vulnerable. Working together, we are helping restore human dignity, ease the pain of want and promote community cooperation that benefits all. As an expression of Christ's hope, peace, joy and love, we are working toward a sustainable, compassionate and just world.

As we celebrate the birth of Christ, let us remember our sisters and brothers around the world. Without you, this transformative work would not be possible!

This Christmas, please support PWS&D.

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Make your donation go even further through regular, monthly donations. Call today to enrol or visit WeRespond.ca/donate.

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