

Creation: A Relationship Of Respect

Rev. Patrick Stephens

*First Week of Lent
Thursday March 10*

Scripture

Psalm 104:14-16

You make grass grow for flocks and herds
and plants to serve mankind;
that they may bring forth food from the earth,
and wine to gladden our hearts,
Oil to make a cheerful countenance,
and bread to strengthen the heart.

Reflection

The natural symmetry of the growing season is seen in the acts of planting and harvesting. The introduction and conclusion of the season is expressed spiritually by the Christian community as Rogation and Harvest Thanksgiving.

Cultures around the world and throughout history have long celebrated harvest festivals. As the labours of the season are brought in for preparation and storage, it is natural to be moved by the abundance of food. The celebration of a bountiful harvest is exciting and can even be overwhelming.

But harvests are not always abundant. Environmental, social, political and other factors often lead to scarcity in the fields, meagre harvests in villages, and shortages of food in the home.

Thanksgiving is an opportunity to celebrate the local harvest. But it is also an opportunity to acknowledge our dependence on God and on our environment.

Harvest Thanksgiving is also an opportunity to move beyond “counting our blessings” and to participate in the redistribution of the wealth that is represented by the abundance of the earth’s yield. Our reliance on God and creation extends naturally to also include the web of relationships that connects all people through our universal human needs and a united desire to live and thrive in a healthy, just and peaceful world.

Prayer

Creator of the fruitful earth, you made us stewards of all things. Give us grateful hearts for all your goodness, and steadfast wills to use your bounty well, that the whole human family, today and in

generations to come, may with us give thanks for the riches of your creation. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord. Amen.

Collect for Thanksgiving, Book of Alternative Services

Emergency food support in Zimbabwe

Zimbabwe, decreased rainfall, poor harvests, reduced opportunities to earn an income due to COVID-19 restrictions and high food prices are adding up to acute food insecurity in 35% of the population.

In response, PWRDF is currently supporting an emergency food relief project, starting January 25 running through to the end of March. Working with DanChurchAid Zimbabwe (DCA), PWRDF was able to leverage \$161,554 from its equity in the Canadian Foodgrains Bank and receive a match from the Government of Canada. The total project budgeted is \$843,948.

If it weren't for emergency humanitarian food assistance programs like this one, more families would likely be worse off, says the IPC Acute Food Insecurity Analysis for October 2020 – March 2021.

This intervention is targeting the worst affected seven rural wards of Lupane district in Matabeleland North Province. These wards have a combined population of approximately 44,590 people in 8,918 households.

The intervention is providing emergency food assistance to 3,600 food insecure households (18,000 individuals). Food rations include:

- 10 kg of maize meal
- 1.5 kg of bean
- 0.75 litre of cooking oil per person per month

The most vulnerable households are prioritized for food assistance including those headed by children, elderly and women and to families with special needs (e.g. disabled people, chronically ill people, and pregnant and lactating women).

A one-time distribution of fast-maturing sorghum and cowpea seed will help re-establish crop production in 1,450 households, and ensure access to food staples when the assistance ends. The crops will be ready to harvest in April. The program will select and train 140 lead farmers, who will then share their knowledge and skills with other farmers in their neighbourhood.

DCA Zimbabwe works with Agritex (government agriculture extension department) to support the farmers on soil and water conservation techniques and also to train them save seeds for future crops.

A sharp rise in COVID-19 infections in early December is being met with a hard lockdown for one month. All but essential services have been closed including the informal markets where most Zimbabweans shop or trade. The lockdown is making it harder for people to sell their food at markets, to buy food or to travel for work to South Africa, which has shut all its land borders in an effort to curb rising numbers.

Read the whole story on our website at

<https://pwrdf.org/pwrdf-supporting-food-relief-in-zimbabwe-with-foodgrains-bank/>

