

Creation: A Relationship Of Respect

Rev. Patrick Stephens

*First Week of Lent
Monday March 7*

Scripture

Proverbs 8:22-31

The Lord created me at the beginning of his work,
the first of his acts of long ago.
Ages ago I was set up,
at the first, before the beginning of the earth.
When there were no depths I was brought forth,
when there were no springs abounding with water.
Before the mountains had been shaped,
before the hills, I was brought forth
when he had not yet made earth and fields,
or the world's first bits of soil.
When he established the heavens, I was there,
when he drew a circle on the face of the deep,
when he made firm the skies above,
when he established the fountains of the deep,
when he assigned to the sea its limit,
so that the waters might not transgress his command,
when he marked out the foundations of the earth,
then I was beside him, like a master worker;
and I was daily his delight,
rejoicing before him always,
rejoicing in his inhabited world
and delighting in the human race

Reflection

Upon graduating from college in 2005, I was accepted as a participant in the Mennonite Central Committee's Serving and Learning Together program. This led to me living for one year in Mymensingh, Bangladesh. I was extremely fortunate to be able to participate in the program and to be able to experience life in another part of the world. Although I really loved the opportunity to learn another language, make friends, and be fully immersed in Bengali culture, there were times that I really missed home.

In 2012, Chris Hadfield was preparing to serve as commander of the International Space Station. It was the first time that a Canadian astronaut would be serving in that particular role. During his mission, Hadfield brought much attention to the life and work of astronauts through regular social media engagements. I found myself following his progress with fascination and learning much about his experience of space travel. What I found most moving about Chris Hadfield's story was the candid way in which he spoke about missing home while he was in outer space. I suppose I had never before heard about the concept of being homesick for Earth itself.

Sometimes the best way to gain a perspective of appreciation for our home is to spend time away from it. Very few people have been to outer space. Their experience, however, can serve as a message for the rest of us. When viewed (or missed) from a distance, the cultural and political divisions of our world seem to fade away. The uniquely hospitable features of our planet seem to become more obvious. And the goodness of creation becomes something worth defending

Prayer

*It is right to give you thanks and praise,
O Lord, our God, sustainer of the universe,
you are worthy of glory and praise.
At your command all things came to be:
the vast expanse of interstellar space,
galaxies, suns, the planets in their courses,
and this fragile earth, our island home;
by your will they were created and have their being.
From the primal elements
you brought forth the human race,
and blessed us with memory, reason, and skill;
you made us the stewards of creation..
Glory to you for ever and ever.
(Portions of Eucharistic Prayer 4, Book of Alternative Services)*

Conservation farming makes an impact in Tanzania

We left Masasi early in the morning for Nachingwea where we paid a courtesy visit to the District Executive Director (local government official) who had helped coordinate the Preventive Health and Food Security project since its start. This project, supported by PWRDF and the Canadian government, took place between 2011 and 2016. Today was an opportunity to see some of the results of that project.

We then drove to the rural village of Ruponda to meet with project beneficiaries and farmers like Joyce Mtauca (below). Some of our delegation met Joyce during the PWRDF Sharing Bread (Two) food security course at Sorrento, B.C. in 2015. Through the program there, Joyce has been able to expand her production and in so doing, contribute to the food security of her community. Joyce was also involved with training many other farmers on food security and how to continue to benefit the community with their production. The delegation visited Joyce's farm and after seeing some of her maize and cassava crops, had the opportunity to harvest and cook some fresh cassava. We helped chop the roots off of the short tree-like plant, and then proceeded to peel and wash the pieces. It was sliced into smaller sections and then the starchy plant was put to cook in a pot of water with a pinch of salt, before being served to

us to be eaten with honey. Cassava is a high calorie, low nutrition crop, used as a staple throughout central eastern Africa. Joyce uses her cassava plants as a cover crop and gives branches of it for other farmers in her community to grow. Eating cassava was new and an interesting experience!

After returning to the village for an honorary meal shared with the community, we visited the Mwenge dispensary which is powered by solar panels and allows for the delivery of babies at night through this PWRDF provision. We then continued our journey to visit the Chip Agro-vet Input Centre where we were surprised with a welcome of singing and dancing. Bishop James and Reverend Geoffrey had surprised us by not telling us that we would be there for the centre's official opening. They even asked Maureen (as the President of the PWRDF board) to open the doors officially. The Chip Agrovet Input Centre, established by the Diocese of Masasi in collaboration with PWRDF and the Canadian government, is providing advisory services on agriculture techniques, agriculture and veterinary inputs, and how they apply. It is also selling the inputs at affordable prices to farmers, thus contributing to food security beyond the life of the PWRDF project.

After a busy day we came to a hotel in Nachingwea to enjoy an evening and night of rest. Tomorrow the delegation looks forward to seeing more of the projects within the diocese and the effects they have had on the communities they involve.

–Leah Marshall, PWRDF Youth Council

Read the whole story on our website at <https://pwrdf.org/sharing-bread-in-tanzania/>