

Love in Action: Living the Gospel: A PWRDF Overview and Update
A Sermon Preached by Dr., Skip Triplett
Church of the Advent, Colwood BC

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Let me begin with some stories from the CBC's on-line news.

The neighbourhood's toilet is a portable one out on Keller Street. The water supply is cut, making showers and clean laundry distant dreams. Residents stay fresh with bottles of hand sanitizer, and they're running low. "Don't stand too close to anyone," Judy Prime said with a chuckle as she took a break from shoveling huge piles of wet sludge out of her garage in the shattered Christchurch, New Zealand, suburb of Avonside.

Prime, 66, has spent each night sleeping on a rubber mat under the dining room table, worried that aftershocks will send parts of her home crashing down. Every evening, she and her neighbors gather in her back yard to share beers and barbecue the meat from her freezer — still good, because it was encased in thick ice when the power went out.

"We've become a family, you know?" she said. ***"What one hasn't got, the other has."***

Across the road, Christmas lights adorn the portable toilet that has stood outside Paul Stokes' house since the September quake knocked out the sewage line. Officials still hadn't gotten around to fixing the pipes from that disaster when Tuesday's temblor hit.

Mayor Bob Parker said 780 portable toilets have been installed throughout the city, and hundreds more are on their way. But many residents have resorted to digging holes in their gardens to take care of business. For those on Keller Street, the Stokes' toilet is a blessing.

Inside their home, Stokes' wife Yvonne sat by a wood stove, warming up from the chilly drizzle outside. Thursday was the first night since the quake that she slept — while sitting up in a chair in the living room. The ceiling in her bedroom is sagging, the walls are cracked and she worries the roof might cave. The whole house will have to be destroyed, she said.

Thursday also marked the first day she'd managed to eat since the disaster; the family cooked up sausages and mashed potatoes on a gas stove.

She clutched the hand of her sister-in-law, Christine Lagan, and cried as the two sat side by side. Lagan took the family's laundry back to her house outside Christchurch on Thursday and returned with fresh clothes — giving the family a small measure of dignity amidst the dismal conditions.

"We go to the toilet and can't even flush," Yvonne said, tears running down her face. "We are in tatters."

Still, Yvonne said neighbours were keeping each other sane by banding together. Neighbours were dropping off meat pies, chocolate and bottles of water to those in need, and the couple who runs a nearby corner store was giving away any food they could spare. **"We're all looking after each other,"** she said.

Workers at the city's iconic Anglican ChristChurch Cathedral continue to search for bodies. It's believed several tourists were inside its tower as the structure collapsed during the quake. The cathedral had survived another quake last September with only minor damage.

The days since the quake have brought a level of misery unusual for residents of Christchurch. Water and power supplies to thousands have been cut, and many have been forced to sleep in their cars or tents as their unstable houses sway with the relentless aftershocks.

On the outer edge of the central district, Brent Smith watched in tears as workers demolished the 1850s-era building where he lived and ran a bed and breakfast and where antique jugs and a valuable Victorian bed were reduced to shards and firewood. Two of his daughters hugged him, also weeping. **"I lost my home, I lost my business. But it doesn't matter, you know, I'm walking around and I'm fit and healthy and my kids are fit and healthy,"** Smith said.

Prime Minister John Key said the government would announce an aid package on Monday for those who are expected to remain out of work for months during the downtown core's reconstruction.

Let me repeat three quotes from the stories I just read:

"I lost my home, I lost my business. But it doesn't matter, you know, I'm walking around and I'm fit and healthy and my kids are fit and healthy,"

"We're all looking after each other,"

"What one hasn't got, the other has."

Now, let me repeat some quotes from another story, the Gospel of Matthew, read to us just a few moments ago.

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?"

Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?"

But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you--you of little faith?"

"We're all looking after each other,"

"What one hasn't got, the other has."

The people of ChristChurch understand the theological idea that we are the body of Christ – His instruments here on earth. Today and every day. They understand the phrases, "Love in Action" and "Living the Gospel". They get it.

And so do the people of this parish who generously support the Primate's World Relief and Development Fund (or PWRDF) to keep it topped-up and ready so that we may all look after each other.

The Primate's Fund was inspired by the Springhill mine disaster in Nova Scotia.

Springhill was a town of just 4000 where all were, directly or indirectly, dependent on the coalmines and an earthquake occurred there in October 1958, trapping 174 miners.

In the end, about 100 miners survived, but about 75 had not, and many of their bodies remained entombed in that mine. This was the third such deadly mine disaster at Springhill, and within days another catastrophe struck, as the Dominion Steel & Coal Corporation was forced to shut down mining operations for good – those mines never reopened.

Unfortunately, in 1958, we had very little in the way of social security nets in Canada, so the families of the dead miners and all in the town whose jobs were lost, were suddenly left destitute. Churches across Canada spearheaded an appeal to raise \$1 million for those families. That was an enormous amount of money back then, and the funding drive took a long time to come together, while in the meantime those families were suffering terribly.

The primate of our national Anglican church at the time, the Most Rev. Walter Barfoot realized that there was a great need for a permanent fund with enough resources to provide immediate relief from such disasters wherever they might occur in Canada and elsewhere in the world, most especially in third world countries.

The following year, the incoming primate, Most Rev. Howard Clark carried this forward, and at the 1959 national Synod, the Primate's World Relief Fund (PWRF) was created.

By 1969, our national Synod recognized that deeper, long-term development needs are strongly connected to most suffering caused by natural or human-provoked disasters. The name of the fund was therefore changed in 1969 to Primate's World Relief and Development Fund.

The events of the last week of the last week – the New Zealand earthquake and the political upheaval in the Middle East – have shown that our national Synods got it right. There is a clear and ever-present need for a permanent fund to provide for immediate disaster relief and for international development.

There is much debate about the reasons for climate change. Many scientists point to the rapidly rising levels of green house gasses generated by the use of carbon based fuels and other human caused pollution. Other scientists claim that the data are misrepresented and that the climate change we experience is part of the natural cooling and heating cycles our planet experiences – with or without human mismanagement.

But, to the best of my knowledge, no scientists are disputing the *fact* of climate change. It *is* occurring and it is occurring *quickly*. While the causes of climate change are important, so too are its consequences and the mitigation of its effects. We need to spend more energy on mitigation and on organizations like the Primate's Fund that undertake to deal with the human component of this mitigation.

One of the many consequences of climate change is that of land being turned into desert. We have seen this happening in many places already. In China some one million farmers have seen their land turn to desert and have had to leave their homes. In Darfur, the long running conflict is being exacerbated as rival factions fight to gain control of the remaining agricultural land.

Some consequences of a changing climate are an increase in the number of storms, increased precipitation, higher temperatures and an increased likelihood of drought conditions. Some parts of the world may witness only slight changes

but in other places the effects will be pronounced.

An increase in the number of storms means that existing sand deserts can be blown from their present location onto fertile land. As the sand shifts new potential agricultural land may be opened up. However, the newly exposed soil will be sterile and much preparation will be required in order to render it suitable for agricultural purposes.

As temperatures rise there is a corresponding increase in water evaporation leading, in turn, to increased precipitation. This often arrives in the form of intense rainfall and flash flooding.

In many parts of the world such as Asia and Africa there are vast tracts of poor quality soil. When heavy rains or floods arrive this thin, weak soil is quickly washed away leaving behind areas that are unsuitable for agriculture.

The shifting weather patterns also mean that some areas are receiving less rainfall than they used to. In areas where precipitation levels were already low this decrease, even if it's comparatively small, can have serious implications. Crops are more likely to fail, the soil will be more quickly eroded and affected areas can turn to desert.

With half the mountain glaciers around the world having already melted, the glacial meltwater that feeds rivers such as the Yellow, Brahmaputra, Ganges and Yangtze is diminishing and less water is flowing in the upper reaches of these rivers. People who rely on them for water are moving elsewhere. Once they abandon their land the irrigation systems quickly fail, the plants die and what was once viable agricultural land becomes desert.

Over the long term the land exposed by shifting deserts, the increased precipitation, and the determined efforts of governments, industries and individuals to mend our destructive ways may begin to bear good fruit. But over the short and medium terms we will be dealing with natural disasters, food shortages, energy shortages and resultant political unrest. Thanks be to God for the wisdom of our national Synods and the creation of our Primate's Fund. Thanks be to God for the wisdom and generosity of the members of this parish. Last year you gave approximately \$9500 through the Church of the Advent. What marvelous support for your neighbors in need!

Please keep contributing. You can do so on-line, through the Church office, or by dropping an envelope marked PWRDF into the collection plate every so often. I try to do so on the first Sunday of each month. This gives me a routine I can remember.

Let me close with a story that appeared on the PWRDF.org web-site last week.

Haji Muhammad is a 57-year old man with heart trouble. His family of six lives in one of 14 permanent houses built by PWRDF in Nilaveli, Sri Lanka after the 2004 tsunami.

"Before the tsunami, I bought and sold fish. My house was close to the beach. It was flooded by the tsunami, so we sheltered in the mosque for two months," he recalled.

The Muhammad family was chosen to receive funding from a PWRDF partner working in Sri Lanka. It chose families who had many members and who were most affected by the tsunami.

Because of the new house provided by PWRDF funds, he has been able to focus his attention on generating income for his family. Muhammad has not returned to his job as a fish merchant, but has focused on raising goats and creating a home garden.

He is able to grow enough eggplant, beans, maize, and cabbage to feed his family and to provide about 150-200 rupees (about \$2 Canadian) per day in extra income. With this money, he is able to send his daughter to school. He sends his thanks to Canadian Anglicans for "helping the very poor people."

The world situation is *not* hopeless – we do make a difference.

As Christchurch's Judy Prime said to the CBC reporter, "**What one hasn't got, the other has.**"

Amen.