

Sermon from PWS&D Sunday Resources
Kirk of St James
Sunday April 26, 2026

Today we gather to celebrate and reflect on the work of Presbyterian World Service & Development, an integral ministry of The Presbyterian Church in Canada that reaches out in Christ's name to people around the world—helping families overcome hunger, gain access to clean water, grow sustainable food and build a future of dignity and hope.

In Matthew 25, Jesus tells us that when we feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty or welcome the stranger we are serving Him. Our faith is a living thing, it is not static, and we are called to help do God's work in the world. Our support of PWS&D is one way we can do that. Through their work we help marginalized men and women to plant crops that can survive drought or learn new skills to feed their family. In so doing we step into the work God has called us to do.

In Matthew 25:31–40, Jesus paints a vivid picture of the final judgment, a scene where the Son of Man comes in his glory and separates the nations as a shepherd separates sheep from goats. At first glance, this passage seems to be about works, but at its heart, it reveals the nature of true discipleship and the heart of God's kingdom. Jesus identifies himself completely with those who are in need: the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the sick and the imprisoned. This identification is startling. He does not simply care about the poor—Jesus locates himself among them. “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you did it to me.” In these words, Jesus collapses any divide between love of God and love of neighbour. Service to the marginalized becomes sacred ground, a meeting place with Christ himself.

We must show deep empathy toward every person created in God's image and likeness, recognizing their eternal worth. This understanding should ignite within us a passion for missions and a fervent desire that none be left behind. Serving humbly among the least of these reflects the humility of Jesus, who left the splendor of heaven to save the weak, the broken, the outcast and the dying. Our service must never arise from mere religious duty, for that only reveals pride. Rather, we serve because we have been served, we love because we have been loved, we lift others because we ourselves have been lifted, and we must never forget this truth.

That means every meal shared, every seed planted through the ministry of PWS&D is more than long-term development or humanitarian aid: it is Christ encountered. When we provide therapeutic food for a child in Malawi, teach sustainable farming in Guatemala or help communities rebuild after disaster we are not only helping others survive: we are meeting Christ himself in the faces of those we serve. Jesus calls us to serve out of humility. The presence of Christ is found not in prestige or power but in vulnerability, need and compassion. Compassion that moves beyond sentiment to action.

As N.T Wright notes in his book *Simply Jesus*, about who Jesus was, what he did and why it matters: "When Jesus wanted to sum up what the kingdom of God looks like, He told a story about people who looked after one another in practical, costly ways."

This is precisely what the ministry of Presbyterian World Service & Development embodies. PWS&D lives out the call of Matthew 25 by seeing Christ in the faces of those who hunger, thirst and seek shelter.

In Guatemala, almost half of the population is Indigenous. Many Indigenous communities, because of racism and prejudice, continue to face social challenges including high rates of poverty, food insecurity and chronic malnutrition, lack of access to health care services

and education, and lack of clean water and sanitation. Gender-based violence has been and continues to be one of the clearest manifestations of inequality of men over women in Guatemala. Violence, rape and forced pregnancies in adolescents are a reality.

PWS&D's work in Guatemala, through local partners, encompasses many priorities. Partners support Indigenous women's empowerment with the goal to reduce inequalities between women and men. They also work to address food security and poverty.

Through the Francisco Coll School, last year 269 students were supported to receive quality holistic free education available to marginalized boys and girls to help end familial cycles of poverty. The Fraternidad de Presbiteriales Mayas are supporting 400 small scale farmers and their families to become food secure. Maya-Mam Association for Research and Development women participants are taking on leadership roles in community organizations to give their perspective on issues impacting women in the community. The Evangelical Centre for Pastoral Studies in Central America is addressing the gender inequalities that Indigenous women and girls face in their communities.

Adolescents and young women are learning about how to manage issues of violence against women in the community. They are advocating in their schools and families to change the relationships between men and women, so they are more equitable. PWS&D has also provided funds to implement rainwater harvesters as a sustainable and efficient solution to provide clean water supply to the municipality of Comitancillo.

One program participant, named Catalina Pérez Aguilón, shares about the difference having water tanks made. She shares, "In my community, we have had problems with our drinking water for two years. As women, we have to carry water and travel 25 minutes to the

river to wash, which is physically exhausting. But today I feel happy because of the water tanks; our family will have safe water for our consumption, irrigation for our family garden, and personal hygiene at home. Water is life; without water, we will all perish, so it is important to take care of water to ensure the future of the next generations.” This is only one example of the amazing work being done through PWS&D.

Matthew 25 calls us to an active, living faith. Matthew 25 calls us to embody that faithfulness in the world. Faith, then, isn’t a quiet belief we hold in our hearts: it’s a posture of compassion, a way of life that mirrors God’s own generosity. When we give to PWS&D, we don’t simply send money or resources: we send hope. We declare that hunger is not inevitable, that poverty is not acceptable and that God’s love is not limited by borders or circumstances.

Through this shared ministry, we also become transformed. We learn to see as Jesus sees, to recognize Jesus’ presence in the faces of those who struggle and to remember that we, too, depend on God’s daily bread. When we live generously, when we ensure that others have enough to eat, we reflect the very heart of God’s kingdom—the place where all are fed, all are welcomed and none are forgotten.

Friends, as followers of Christ, we are called to be bearers of hope in a hungry world. When we give, when we pray, when we serve, we participate in God’s own mission of justice and mercy. Through PWS&D, we see what happens when faith becomes love in action: hope takes root where despair once lived.

May we never forget that in every act of compassion, we meet Christ, the One who said, “I was hungry, and you gave me something to eat.” So let us go and live as people of that kingdom trusting God’s promises, walking humbly, loving generously and bringing hope to the hungry, until all are fed and all know they are loved. Amen.