

DAYSRING DAYBOOK

MEGA DISASTERS 2017

2017 has been a year of many disasters with many lives lost and destruction of a great deal of property:

- ◆ Fires that have raged in British Columbia and California
- ◆ Hurricanes that have ravaged the Caribbean and southern USA
- ◆ Floods that have taken thousands of lives and destroyed the livelihood of millions of people in Bangladesh
- ◆ Civil unrest in Cameroon that has disrupted the lives of thousands of people and resulted in some deaths
- ◆ Etc.

How do we deal with tragedies such as these? How can the Gospel (i.e. “good news”) sustain us as we deal, on a daily basis, with “very bad news?”

It is not easy to believe that God is in charge when disasters occur. In fact, if we do believe that God is in charge, we are apt to blame God for the disasters. Why does God allow or cause human suffering?

Many human disasters and crises can be attributed to human failings. We humans have not done a very good job of looking after the earth and its resources. We humans have, in some cases deliberately and in other situations ignorantly, taken actions that have actually put ourselves and/or others at risk (e.g. by building homes in flood plains). As a result of human action in the present or as a result of the cumulative effect of human action over many millennia, disasters will occur. Tribalism and nationalism will provoke armed conflict and genocide.

But there is still “Good News.”.....*see pages 3 and 4*



QUOTE OF THE MONTH

Martin Luther (1516) demanded a new kind of thinking about the world, an expectation-thinking that corresponds to the Christian hope.



Bangladesh Flooding 2017

In This Issue

- Mega-Disasters 2017
- The Beauty of Poverty
- From Our Minister
- Connectionalism as an Expression of Hope
- Seeing Disaster with “Different” Eyes



Malawi Market

The Beauty of Poverty?

Vivian Woodley Bertrand (October 2, 2017)

Photos of people living in poverty in the developing world often appear beautiful, which is something I find perplexing. They often show lush fields with people clothed in traditional, colourful clothing or beautiful, smiling children.

This is something I've been struggling with since our first day here on September 3rd. As we were driving from the airport to our new home, I was overcome with emotion. The tears I fought back weren't tears of sorrow. I'm sure I was feeling the relief of finally arriving in Malawi after months of preparation and anticipation and days of travel. But there was more. It was something about the scene I saw along the road that struck my heart. Was it the women walking with large baskets on their heads and babies tied to their backs, or the many children and adults walking along the side of the road, or the people gathered around tiny store fronts just up the dirt hill from the road? Perhaps it was the brown mountains circling the city and the tropical vegetation all around? The people, the landscape, and the mountains all seemed so strong. And despite the litter all around and the dirty and dusty ground, something seemed beautiful.

I think we see the beauty in poverty when we see the beauty of such resilient and strong people. Malawi is ranked 170 on the United Nation's Human Development Index. The average number of years a Malawian attends school is 4 (compared to 13 in Canada). The gross national income per capita in Malawi is \$1,073, whereas in Canada it is \$42,582. Of the 16 million people living in Malawi, 15 million have no access to electricity. Those who have access can't always afford it, and almost everyone experiences "rolling blackouts" due to lack of supply. Despite living in extreme poverty, most Malawians are warm and very optimistic. Despite what they lack, most people I meet here seem to be grateful for what they have.

...continued next column

But poverty is ugly and horrible. Garbage ends up everywhere here because of the lack of a garbage disposal service. And there are no public garbage cans. Then there are the deeper horrors of poverty. Last week I spoke to a friend whose niece—a young mother—was beaten to death by her husband. The couple's one-year old child is still living with that father and left without a mother. There will be no justice served through a criminal system: there is no criminal system for the poorest of the poor in Malawi and no police to assist a woman at risk of domestic violence. There is no money for lawyers. There will be no trial. So, although there is something extremely beautiful about sunny, tropical landscapes and the strength and endurance of people living in poverty, the longer I live here, the more I understand the suffering and ugliness of poverty.

Living in Malawi with our family may sound heroic or admirable to North Americans, but we live an easy life here compared to the vast majority of Malawians. And in a few years we will return to Canada where we will once again have all the modern conveniences we are so used to. A few weeks ago, I complained to my husband about our kitchen because the fridge doesn't work properly, we have no electricity 2 or more days every week, the oven has no numbers on it (I think I've figured out roughly where to turn the dial for 350F), and we have no dishwasher. And yet I have far more than most Malawians.

After living without some of the things we are so used to having in Canada, I hold even more respect for the people living here. I know what it means for our family to live part of the week without electricity, so I have a better sense of what it means for most Malawians to live with none. I also have a better sense of the true ugliness of poverty, and the strength and optimism of the people of Malawi seems even more beautiful.

Vivian and her husband the Rev. Dr. Blair Bertrand are missionaries of the PCC in Malawi. Blair is teaching in the seminary of the Blantyre Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Central Africa. Vivian hopes to support the Synod's work combating poverty. This article, was originally posted at <https://missionaries.com/2017/10/12/the-beauty-of-poverty/> and is used here with permission.

FROM OUR MINISTER

How can we help?

Apparently the Greek philosopher, Heraclitus said, "Everything changes but change itself. Everything flows and nothing remains the same... You cannot step twice into the same river, for other waters are continually flowing on." Heraclitus is often depicted as "the weeping philosopher" and lived between 535 and 475 BCE.

This past year we have seen so many things changing, and change often appears to be happening at an accelerated rate. We too, tend to want to "weep" about all the changes happening.

While catastrophes have been rampant and while through social media we hear of them almost immediately, our faith in our creator-God can be challenged. A person can easily become troubled as we also read and hear about mass-shootings and terrorist attacks. On top of all of this some of us become socially isolated and desperation increases.

What a bleak picture I've painted. How can we as believers be of help? Perhaps all we can do is to find our personal help in the knowledge that God is sovereign and will never desert us.

The gospel-writer John wrote the following assuring words from Jesus to his troubled disciples, just before being crucified, "*I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!*" (John 16:33 – New Revised Standard Version).

Indeed, we are in "this" world and we need to help in this current world. We can reach out to those who are troubled give an assuring gesture of being present, without pre-

tending that we have all the answers. It is indeed a time of huge concern that we live in. Therefore, our faith is the one thing that we can share with those we encounter.



A handwritten signature in green ink, which appears to read "Heinrich".

Connectionalism as an Expression of Hope

Presbyterianism is a connectional expression of being Christian. We understand that God's work of reclaiming and renewing the earth does not just depend on the faithfulness of individuals or even of congregations - rather occurs through the collective action of the many individuals and congregations that comprise the Presbyterian Church in Canada (PCC) and, in many situations, the collective action of many different denominations and para-church organizations.

The many can do much more than the few.

So the PCC is structured in such a way as to support congregations in their local ministry and mission and to give congregations a means through which they can support persons who serve with partner churches to the ends of the earth. An example of the former is the provision of education for clergy. An example of the latter can be seen in the story about the Bertrand family, newly arrived in Malawi, on p. 2. We support these and many other similar initiatives through our financial gifts to **Presbyterians Sharing**.

The PCC also has an agency called **Presbyterian World Service & Development** (PWS&D). As the name implies, one of the functions of this agency is development (working with partners in less developed countries on projects designed to enhance people's lives). The other function is response to specific disasters, usually in concert with other non governmental agencies (NGOs) and with United Nations and local governments. The PCC has a small team of dedicated and knowledgeable PWS&D staff members who develop networks and partnerships through which development projects and disaster relief can be delivered in a way that is highly effective. Our financial contributions to PWS&D yield great results.

So what does this have to do with "hope?"

This is "hope in action." We do not have to respond to disaster with helplessness. Rather, we can allow God to use us and use our resources to improve lives and mitigate the effect of disasters.

That is Good News.

Read on to page 4 for some more "Good News."

Seeing Disaster with “Different” Eyes

One of the most eloquent contributors to this emerging story [about the flooding in Houston, TX] is Lacey M. Johnson, an English professor at Rice University in Houston who evacuated when her neighborhood was threatened by the controlled release of flood waters to benefit other parts of the city. In a recent Facebook post, Lacey writes:

Water destroys what it touches: carves canyons out of deserts, swallows people, ice, whole cities and continents. It also destroys the trivial things we spend our lives worshipping: our houses, our streets, our pride, our temples to bigotry and greed. I have heard now a story of a man who had escaped his flooding neighborhood, only to row back in his kayak to save one more person or one more thing, and capsized in the current. He was missing all night and in the morning they found him holding on to a tree. A teenager was swept away in the current of the bayou and caught the grate of a bridge and held on there for dear life until rescuers found her in the morning. An infant was taken from her mother by the current and the current offered that brand new life back to the churning sea.

But water also washes, gives life, makes new. The water has destroyed this city — there’s no two ways about it — but the outpouring of love I have witnessed here among neighbors and strangers and coming to us from all over the world, is the most beautiful thing I have ever seen.

Excerpted from an article in the newsletter of the Taos Institute by the Rev. Dr. Duane Bidwell, Professor of Practical Theology, Spiritual Care and Counseling at Claremont School of Theology

Contact Us

Dayspring Presbyterian Church
11445-40 Ave
Edmonton, AB, CAN,
T5J0R4
Admin@DayspringChurch.ca
780-435-3111
Visit us on the web at
www.DayspringChurch.ca

DayBook Editors
Marilyn & John Carr
DayBook@DayspringChurch.ca
Photography by Ken Rooney
and other Dayspringers

DayBook Deadlines
3rd Sunday of September,
October and June
2nd Sunday of December,
January, February,
March, April, and May

SESSION

Moderator: Heinrich Grosskopf

Session Clerk: Darlene Eerkes

Deputy Clerk: Iris Routledge

Roll Clerk: Jim Jeatt

Other Elders

Bill Davis	Walters Munde
Jane de Caen	Nick Nation
John Carr	Stanley Ngwa
Ingrid Dukhedin-Lalla	Laura Patterson-
Peter Eerkes	Fortin
Carina Grosskopf	Todd Shipman
Sam Jaikaran	Darleen Springstein
Gina Kottke	Heather Tansem

MINISTER

The Rev. Dr. Heinrich Grosskopf

CHURCH STAFF

Church School Coordinator: Lynn Vaughan

Youth Coordinator: Shane Johnson

Worship Arts Coordinator
Gordon McCrostie, B.Mus., M.T.S.

Pianist: Binaifer (Binu) Kapadia, B.Mus.

Alternate Pianist
Darolyn McCrostie, B.Mus., P.D.A.D.
(Education)

Administrative Assistant: Linda
Custodians: Lindsey & Jim Matthew