

# Service *of the* Word | ETHIOPIA

## TRANSCRIPT

### 0:00 *Introduction*

#### **Pastor Carla Blakely**

Hi, my name is Pastor Carla Blakely. I am the Community and Donor Relations Director for Canadian Lutheran World Relief. I'd like to welcome you today to this service of the word video, focusing around our work on food insecurity. For the reflection today, you're going to hear from Sophia Gebreyes who is the Country Director for Lutheran World Federation, Ethiopia.

Sophia used to work in the Canadian Lutheran World Relief office and is now the director in Ethiopia and we're happy to be in partnership with her. Special thanks to Tyler Braun, who is the Program Manager for Canadian Lutheran World Relief, who brings more detail to the work we're doing, specifically in Ethiopia.

Special thanks as well to Pastor Daphne Bender from St. Paul's Langenburg who wrote the prayers of the people, and she has Edie and Nettie with her, praying the prayers. And then we're out in the Canola Field with brothers, Roly and Rod Schappert. Roly supports Canadian Lutheran World Relief in our programming in Ethiopia through the Canadian Foodgrains Bank. So, special thanks to Roly.

We're also very thankful for our partnership again with Inshallah, bringing their gift of music and inspiration to each of these videos. Please enjoy.

### 1:25 *Gathering Song*

#### **Cherup Phillips:**

Hello. My name is Cherup Phillips and I'm a member of Inshallah choir at Martin Luther University College. As of today, the 20th of October, there are 40,931,000 confirmed cases of COVID with a death tally of 1,127,000. COVID-19 is causing a hunger crisis in Burundi, when we are well-nourished in the safety of our homes. There are 26 million refugees on our planet. Half of them are children without a place to call their own, while we enjoy a sense of belonging and comfort in our homes.

Every year, over 1.6 million people worldwide lose their lives to various forms of violence when we are safely tucked away in our homes. The song, Senzeni Na is an anti-apartheid song that comes to us from South Africa.

It's a question: What have we done? The question is then an acknowledgement, an admission of our part in suffering and injustices that are in our world. It's also at the same

time, an invocation, a prayer, to join in the struggle for peace and justice for all, and not just for a select few. Let us pray in singing.

## **2:45 *Inshallah Singing***

## **5:30 *Greeting***

**Pastor Carla Blakely**

The grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all, and also with you.

## **5:45 *Opening Prayer***

**Pastor Carla Blakely**

Let us pray. Oh Lord of abundance, we are hungry. We are hungry for enough food for every person. We are hungry for justice that allows food to be given to everyone. You've come and told us that you are bread of life in whom we all have a share. Bring us to the table where a place is reserved for the poor and the hungry. Help our churches to become the table on earth where bread of life is shared. Oh God, feed us, bodies and souls, the hungry and the weary. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

## **6:30 *Reflection***

**Sophia Gebreyes:**

When Jesus heard what had happened, he withdrew by boat privately to a solitary place. Hearing this, the crowds followed him on foot from the towns. When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, and he healed their sick.

As evening approached, the disciples came to him and said, "This is a remote place and it's already getting late. Send the crowds away so that they can go to the villages and buy themselves some food."

Jesus replied, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat." "We have here only five loaves of bread and two fish," they answered. "Bring them here to me," he said. And he directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves. Then he gave them to the disciples and the disciples gave them to the people.

They all ate and were satisfied. And the disciples picked up 12 baskets full of broken pieces that were left over. The number of those who ate was about 5,000 men, besides women and children. Today's reading from Matthew's chapter 14:13-21 about feeding the 5,000 is very close to my heart and resonates loudly with me as it immediately makes me think of the collaboration between the Lutheran World Federation Ethiopia and Canadian Lutheran World Relief.

You see, I cut my teeth in developing the humanitarian work with CLWR over 25 years ago, in Canada. And I'm so familiar with it up to the minute details of what goes into the feeding of the thousands, from fundraising to shipping in Canada, the customs clearing in distribution in Ethiopia.

For close to half a century, CLWR fed millions through food aid and food security projects all over the country. During the famine years of biblical proportions in the 1970s, CLWR and later in the 1980s, CLWR and Canadian Foodgrains Bank (CFGB) were present to feed multitudes with food commodities shipped from Canada all the way to Ethiopia, the gesture of solidarity from a country that is more than 12,000 kilometers away.

When I think of feeding of the 5,000, I think about the personal commitment of many Canadian farmers working off their land in the vast Canadian prairies, dedicating part of their farm land to what has become known as growing projects, the bounty of which is destined to people in far off lands.

I think of many church members contributing to ocean freight to cover costs for ocean-crossing and the inland transport, and the 40-foot containers filled to the brim with food commodities. I think of many CLWR employees, including myself, issuing receipts to account for the pouring donations and working on upstream and downstream accountability.

I think of truck drivers, loaders, dock and ship workers ensuring that these precious cargos safely leave the Canadian shore to reach the destination and intended beneficiaries halfway around the world. However, the miracle of feeding the 5,000 kept on giving over and over again, CLWR and CFGB also made sure that people who received the food, also work on soil and water conservation projects, constructing small irrigation schemes and laying the ground for a better, brighter future.

The term 'food for work' was coined then and came to epitomize CLWR, CFGB and LWF Ethiopia's work for more than four decades. With solar and water conservation projects based on food for work, the workers not only fed themselves until the food commodities were depleted, but became food secure by growing food twice a year, sometimes thrice a year, once the construction of the schemes was completed, turning food-deficit areas to food-surplus areas so much so, that shipping commodities from Canada was seized and local purchase began to be promoted to support the construction of more irrigation schemes.

This is one, if not, third proudest achievement of CLWR and CFGB in Ethiopia. Ethiopia is still a mostly rural country where agriculture represents 46.3% of the gross domestic product, 83.9% of exports, and 80% of the labor force that agriculture largely remains subsistence and rainfed agriculture and where in fact, that leaves the farmers extremely vulnerable to the precious weather, which is increasingly unpredictable and erratic.

The droughts are becoming more frequent, mainly due to El Niño and La Niña, two commonly experienced weather phenomena impacted Ethiopia that have repeatedly resulted in devastating impacts on rural livelihoods. While the two phenomenon are natural cyclical weathering events, they used to occur every eight to 10 years. They now seem to occur every other year.

In 2016, we had Super El Niño, the largest drought in half a century that hit the cereal growing Northern parts of Ethiopia, followed by La Niña and the negative Indian Ocean Dipole in 2017 that affected the Southern belt or the pastoralist region of the country, forcing over 20 million people to depend on humanitarian assistance.

This year, [inaudible 00:12:09] seasonal rains are wreaking havoc in many parts of the country. The most severe impact is the recurring nature of the disasters that does not allow enough time for people to recover and build the ever elusive resilience.

The close to 20 million people in need of humanitarian assistance this year, includes residual caseloads from droughts and floods in 2016 and '17, and widespread displacement in 2018 and '19, who kept being hit by one disaster after the next, the one more devastating than the one before.

Even in good years, Ethiopia cannot meet its large food deficit through a rainfed agriculture. Growing population pressure in the highland areas of rainfed agriculture on a rapidly declining natural resource base, has secured irrigated agriculture, a prominent position on the country's development agenda.

Ethiopia has an irrigation potential of 2.7 million hectares, but only a 130,000 hectares are currently irrigated, representing 0.05% of the total irrigation potential. That is precisely why CLWR and CFGB continue to support the construction of irrigation schemes.

Currently, they're supporting the construction of one new irrigation scheme and the rehabilitation of another in Northern Ethiopia, a region that has seen the largest share of the recurrent droughts and famines, through the support of community farmers as well as generous matching from Global Affairs, Canada, but the needs remain great. Thank you for accompanying us all these years and for leaving such an indelible footprint across Ethiopia. Thank you.

**13:55 Tyler Braun:**

Hello, Hi, my name is Tyler Braun. I've been a Program Manager with CLWR for the last four years or so, although, I'm here to talk to you about some of the things that we're doing to support long-term food security for small-scale farmers in Ethiopia. One of the current projects that we're supporting is called the Lasta Lalibela Food Security Project, which is being implemented through our membership in the Canadian Foodgrains Bank.

This project is an area called the North Wollo Zone. This is a zone which is considered one of the most disaster-prone areas of the country with frequent droughts, crop pests, floods, frost, hailstorms, which have repeatedly struck this area for many years. And this is becoming more and more frequent in the last couple of years. And this is a major problem as the livelihoods of most households that live in this area are subsistence farmers.

So in order to address this, we're doing this food security project and this one started in July 2018 and is targeting 690 households in three rural Kebeles — so three little towns or villages in Lasta. Specific focuses of this training is activities that focus on natural resource conservation management, reforestation of watersheds.

We're building one and rebuilding another irrigation schemes. We also looked at

community management capacity, so we're forming committees that can help manage shared communal areas. We're doing conservation, agricultural new cropping techniques. We're also working on doing trainings on increased gender equality in community and household decision-making.

So there's a lot of things going on in this project, but one of the things I want to talk specifically about is our work on watersheds and how that interacts with our work with the irrigation schemes, because some of the things we are doing with watersheds is really, really neat.

And it's not always a focus of what we talk about in these projects, but I think it's quite cool what's happening. So for those who are not familiar, the watershed area, it's a sloped area, sometimes hills on three sides and it creates a bit of a basin. So, when rain comes, all the water flows out on all the sides into one common location.

And in these areas, this is where farmers have typically practiced traditional irrigation. So they've created traditional irrigation schemes, we call them. They'll pile rocks or use wood beams or bags of sand, which slows the water flow and then allows them to divert it towards their plots of land where they're growing, to irrigate them with water that's at a more controlled flow and they can also control the water a little bit more because it holds it until they need it, and then they can release the water.

The problem with these traditional irrigation schemes is that they break frequently. When water flows down really fast, it knocks away the rocks and breaks the bags, and breaks the wood logs. So then people are frequently having to repair them. If water breaks through, it can flood certain pieces of land and other spaces of land won't get any irrigation, which could mean the loss of crops for that season.

Now, the other issue is in the watersheds themselves, these basin areas that are above the irrigation scheme. A lot of issues are going on. We're having more heavy rainfall, which is putting more pressure on these areas and also uncontrolled grazing or animals, which is eating up the vegetation.

And the combination of this is when the water flows, it is stripping the soil down with it, away from this watershed with it, which means that nothing can grow there. It also means increased erosion. It also means that as there's more erosion, less natural streams are forming as there's not as much water in the soil, which in the end, means less water access for farming.

So what we're doing here, which is really simple, but really, really effective, is planting trees and building things called stone buttons and cement buttons and different types of these interventions along the watershed area. So we plant trees and the root systems solidify the soil a little bit more, and the rock buns also do this.

Rock buns are the rocks that are in basically little wire mesh cages that are placed in strategic locations along the watershed. So when you get rain, the water can come through these rocks, or they flow around the trees, but they keep the soil intact and let all the water flow down through the irrigation scheme used. The biodiversity of the watershed area itself is not getting destroyed.

So then at the bottom of these, this is where we're building our irrigation schemes. One of the ones that we're building, is going to reduce the area that can be irrigated up to 40 hectares from the current 20 hectares.

So this current one, it's still only in its third year of three years. We just started the third year now. And the watershed work is this thing that's the most visibly impactful on the farmers. The irrigation agriculture, this is going to take a bit more time to see the benefits, but within these watershed areas, we're seeing a lot of really cool positive impacts.

Because the soils are being stripped away, we're seeing more forage, growing natural forage for livestock. Community members are reporting substantially increased groundwater levels, which is evidenced by a number of permanent springs developing. And this is because we're not seeing as much erosion in the water staying in the soil as opposed to just flowing all the way away.

Because we're seeing some of these more immediate impacts, and these really cool natural impacts, people are getting really excited about this. In a project that we just completed two years ago, one of the project participants, he noted that before CLWR and [LDBF 00:20:54] had done this work on the watersheds, they just kept on seeing the soil walk away from their land.

Now, they've seen that through these relatively simple techniques such as just planting trees in the watershed area, they've learned that erosion can be controlled and they can also contribute to increasing groundwater levels.

Through these projects, we always create committees that'll manage the watersheds, that will manage the irrigation schemes that we've built. Community members have told us that they're seeing increased availability and diversity of vegetation on land that wasn't there a year or two ago. As you see more vegetation growing, they can fatten livestock for more, which can then be sold, which increases both income and food. They've also reported the return of wild animals to the area, which can be hunted for food as well, which is very beneficial for the area.

In one area, they said they used to have one seasonal spring, but after our work on the watershed area, they now have three permanent streams in the area. And they're seeing all sorts of other things too, the return of wild bees as the area becomes more diverse and vegetation and things, or flowers that the bees want to come to.

And these visible changes have made the community extremely excited about the impacts of this project now, and also the potential impacts for the future as the irrigation schemes become more and more functional, that are below these watersheds. So it's really exciting to see some of this work. And this is work that all of this work is being done by community members, so there's a real ownership.

And it's just exciting to see what's happened now and what will happen in the future, so that's what I wanted to talk about now. And I just hope you maybe learned a little bit about the watersheds. I know I was very excited to begin to understand how these things all work and some of the cool things we're doing there with these relatively simple interventions. Thanks for listening.

**23:00 Prayers of the People**

**Pastor Daphne Bender:**

We gather together our prayers for the church and the world, responding after each petition, Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

**23:15 Nettie Wileman:**

You prepare a table before us, oh God, that has more than enough for all your creation. Yet when we look at the table, we see how some have too much and others have too little. Forgive us when we are content with the uneven distribution of your gifts of food. Open our hands to share from our abundance. Lord, in your mercy

**23:45 Roly Schappert:**

God, you create land and rivers with the intent to sustain the creatures that reside upon them and within them. Forgive us when we misuse and abuse the natural resources you provide. Encourage us to seek sustainable practices when using Earth's gifts. Lord, have mercy.

**24:05 Edie Lowenberger:**

Creator, we pray for partnerships between Lutheran World Federation and Canadian Lutheran World Relief. We pray for Ethiopian country director, Sophia Gebreyes, and the work in Ethiopia. We give thanks for water channels to bring the life-giving water to small-scale farmers, so growing food is possible. Lord, in your mercy.

**24:30 Pastor Daphne Bender:**

God, we give thanks for the Canadian Foodgrains Bank and for producers like Roly, who so generously give to alleviate hunger in this world. Lord, in your mercy.

**24:48 Nettie Wileman:**

Lord, you require that we do justice and walk humbly with you. Wipe away corruption and greed that interfere with producing and accessing food. Show us how to write the injustices and encourage humility before you. Lord, in your mercy.

**25:10 Edie Lowenberger:**

We pray that you give us our daily bread, oh God, yet we overlook our calling to see that all humans receive their daily bread. Where food is scarce or supply is unpredictable, reveal to us ways to make food abundant and predictable. Lord, in your mercy.

**25:30 Rod Schappert:**

God, you love all human beings and have commanded us to love each other as you love us. Help us show your love to those who are hungry, suffering from drought, and searching for shelter and substance. Keep their needs in our hearts and our minds always. Lord, have mercy.

**25:55 Pastor Daphne Bender:**

Into your hands gracious God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy through your son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

**26:20 *Blessing and Sending Song***

**Debbie Lou Ludolph:**

My name is Debbie Lou Ludolph, and I'm the Director of Inshallah at Martin Luther University College. In 2017, we recorded this sending song with Inshallah kids and a group from our local high school, called crossing borders, who were newcomers to our region.

We invite you to sing along. The first part is call and response. You sing, oh yeah. And the second part, As-salamu alaykumlay, which is Arabic for peace to you, peace in your heart, peace in your home, peace in your land, peace in our world, a gift of song from Ghana.

**27:10 *Inshallah Singing***

**28:50** Go in Peace. Serve the Lord.

**29:10 *Credits***

Thank you to Inshalla  
(Kanata Centre for Worship and Global Song, Martin Luther University College)  
for the music that was provided today.

Salaam Aleikum

Words and Music: Traditional Ghanaian;

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Senzeni na?

Words and Music: Traditional South African