



2022 ELCIC Praise Appeal Sunday — SERMON

By ELCIC National Bishop Susan Johnson

Grace to you and peace in the name of Jesus, our sibling. Thank you for participating in this year's ELCIC Praise Appeal, an opportunity to do second mile giving in support of the work of the National Church.

This year's praise appeal looks at the theme of compassionate justice, one of the areas of focus for the National Church. We work in compassionate justice in a variety of ways with a variety of partners.

Through our partnership with Canadian Lutheran World Relief, we work together to challenge the causes and respond to the consequences of injustice and poverty. As I speak today, that includes the joint appeal for the crisis in Ukraine.

Through KAIROS—a church-based non-governmental organization that represents 10 of Canada's largest denominations, including the ELCIC, we work together in faithful action for ecological justice and human rights.

With the World Council of Churches, a fellowship of 352 churches from more than 120 countries, representing over 580 million Christians worldwide, we have been an avid supporter of *#thursdaysinblack* for many years now—a global movement resisting attitudes and practices that permit rape and violence. More recently we have joined with the Anglican, Presbyterian and United Churches to lift this work up jointly in our Canadian context.

As a member of The Lutheran World Federation we join in a global communion of 145 member churches in 79 countries all over the world representing over 70 million Christians. The LWF acts on behalf of its members in areas of common interest such as ecumenical and interfaith relations, theology, humanitarian assistance, international affairs and human rights, communication, and mission and development. The LWF furthers global "diakonia" among member churches, addressing human need, promoting peace, human rights, social and economic justice, care for God's creation and the sharing of resources.

We also work in compassionate justice through the work of our National Convention—which created the following task forces: Task Force Addressing Ableism, the Task Force Addressing Racism, White Supremacy and Racial Injustice, and the Task Force Addressing Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia.

Through our work in the area of Compassionate Justice we also continue to pursue right relationships with Indigenous Peoples, promote responsible resource extraction, address issues of homelessness and affordable housing, uphold stewardship of creation initiatives, support and work for justice and peace in the Holy Land, and more.

The reason we do all this work, with staff and volunteers, with synods and bishops, with partners, is that God calls us to take part in God's work of justice and peace for our world, including all of creation. Our texts today proclaim that!

The reality we face in our world seems only to see increasing amounts of injustice. We can become overwhelmed and incapacitated. The news shows us natural disasters one day, wars the next, racist extremism the next and so on. It is hard to keep attention on any of the issues or any of the parts of the world where injustice continues to take place.

That is why I love the text about the persistent widow. When a judge rules unjustly against her, she continues to lift up her request for justice until the judge is worn down by her constant pursuit.

That is what we are called to do as well. No one of us can meaningfully take on all areas of injustice in our world. But we are called to look for where injustice is immediately apparent to us and to work alone or with others to try and address it. What kinds of injustice is happening in your community? Do you have a lot of homeless people? Then you might be called to work to end poverty and create affordable housing. Are you near or even aware of a reserve with a boil water advisory? Then maybe you need to build a relationship with that nation and join them in calling for justice. Are you concerned about climate change? Then maybe you need to find other groups within your community to do what you can to address your part of climate justice. Or maybe you need to call on governments to move faster in their commitments. Talk to your MP, write to the Prime Minister and opposition leaders. Be persistent!

We are all called to pray for God's justice, peace and mercy to bring change to places of injustice, to soften the hearts of political and business leaders, to build consensus in grassroots organizations, and to help us love our neighbour.

My prayer for our church, for you, and for me, is that we can learn more and more how to follow in God's ways of justice and peace, through our prayers, the use of our resources, and our actions, and that we might have the same determination and persistence that the widow showed towards the unjust judge.

Amen.