



Share food this Christmas



“He has filled the hungry with good things” Luke 1:53a

Share Food with the World

On this Christmas Day we celebrate the birth of Christ with our world. It is a time of hope and hope is a verb. Hope is what we do together to make space so all people can share life in all its fullness.

In our community of faith, we bring the world to this place. In this ancient story, we find the baby in the manger and listen for the word of God that gives life to the world. In the Holy Land touches, in Ukraine and Sudan, God is there.

The Christmas Story is a promise that the world can be fairer, kinder, and a more peaceful place where all people have water, food and justice, the essentials of life. It is our hope and our prayer.

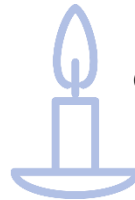
Note: there are two optional slides for this Sunday. One is a refugee family in Poland and the other from Gaza.

Call to Worship

God dreams into being a new earth and a new humanity.
God calls us to nurture this holy birth
Who is listening?

Who will respond?

Lighting the Christ Candle



On this Christmas Day, we listen for stories of love and new life.

Read the Partner Story

In Poland, Irena, her two children and a friend share a meal, far from their home in Ukraine. They have found shelter, food and psychosocial support thanks to our partner, the Lutheran World Federation and local churches.

In Gaza, churches offer food and shelter to some of the many people made hungry and homeless. Our partner the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees plans to distribute emergency relief and rebuild its Primary Health Clinics

and Vocational Training Centres as soon it is safe.

As a member of ACT Alliance – Action by Churches Together – we work together to provide practical help to people after disasters and in places of conflict.

On this Christmas Day we celebrate the love we find in Christ with the world.

Light the candle

As pōhutukawa and rātā bloom
on hillside and seashore

We light the Christ Candle.

Christ, our fragrant summer flower,
may your hope, peace, joy and love
fill all our hillsides and seashores;
may your light shine strongly
in places of violence and injustice
in our world, this day and every day.

We light the Christ Candle.

Lectionary Thoughts

At Christmas we celebrate that Jesus came among us, a gift of life for God's world. As we gather at church and in our homes, let us consciously connect with each other through God's Word and in this global celebration of hope.

The readings speak of the joy that comes after the suffering. People do not need to live in violence and fear for all time. The promise of Christ is that the world can be turned upside down – not once but many times. God is deeply involved in life, especially with the people who are forgotten or have no home. We need to make room at our table and listen for their stories.

“If Jesus was born today, he would be born in the rubble.”

Rev Dr Munther Isaac from Bethlehem.

Isaiah 52: 7-10

Isaiah writes with joy when Jerusalem is at peace after years of conflict and suffering. When there is peace, people can plant and harvest their crops. They can build and know that their homes will not be burned to the ground. They can send their children to school and dream of a better future.

The reading contrasts sharply with the city of Jerusalem today where people of all faiths are living with more. Christians have [cancelled](#) the Christmas celebrations in Bethlehem. There will be no lights but only laments. We read the words of Isaiah and pray for the peace of the world.

Psalm 98

On this joyous day, we celebrate the birth of Jesus as a gift of God for the world. In reading this psalm, we come to the holy mountain (v.9) of faith and join the stream of people who have been on this path of justice and equity since the beginning of time. We can know what is happening in Jerusalem, Gaza, Ukraine, Sudan in so many places of pain, and not give up on the dream of peace. The writer speaks to the experience of Israel but with a vision of the whole earth giving praise to God (v.3).

Hebrews 1: 1-4, (5-12)

In these opening verses the writer of Hebrews contrasts the time of the prophets with "these last days" (v.2) in which he was writing. In our Judeo-

Christian tradition, the prophets speak for justice and truth, for the people. Jesus offers much more. When life is hard and we are facing apocalypse, Jesus is there for all people, 'he sustains all things by his powerful word" (v. 3b).

John 1: 1-14

The words of Genesis are echoed in these words of John that express the timelessness of faith. John's words are more than words on a page. They are powerful and creative – they can make things happen. These words are words that give life (v.4).

As we celebrate Christmas at the height of summer, the light is different than in the northern hemisphere. The darkness is short and the hours of light very long, allowing for a big vision that embraces the world. 'The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.' (v9) It is this true light that illuminates our world, today and every day.

This Advent let's make time to connect with the God of Love and Life - who has our best interests at heart, who does not forget the people that are most often forgotten.

Prayer

Loving God

We give thanks for what we have, for our families and for food, for God's great gift of love.

We pray for our world, for the people who are longing for bread and for peace, for those who cannot escape the violent

sounds of war and who live in absolute fear for their lives. We remember the people of Gaza, Sudan, Ukraine and all who live with violence.

We pray for the people who can silence the weapons and stop the war. As people who share your world, we pray for peace.

Help us find the courage to face the hard stuff, to make the changes that we can make, to share what we can.

In your loving name we pray.

Amen

Blessing

As the summertime Kiwi forages on into the daylight a new era is dawning
this is the turning point of time
this holy birth changes everything.
Let us now live this newness!
Kia tumanako. Be hope!
Kia tika. Be just!
Kia mau te rongo. Be peace!
Kia koa. Be joy!
Kia aroha. Be love!
So be it!

Music

AA Alleluia Aotearoa
CAHON Complete Anglican Hymns Old and New
CH4 Church Hymnary 4th edition
CoC Carol our Christmas

- The kingdom of God is justice and peace (Taize) Ritualsong 846/various Taize books
- Come, Lord Jesus (Chris de Silva), Ritualsong 510
- Kauri, Flax & Rata Trees (Norman Brookes)

- Pohutakawa Promise (Norman Brookes)
- The Season of the Flowering (Bill Wallace)
- Carol Our Christmas (Shirley Murray & Colin Gibson)

Activity

- Read the [partner story](#).
- You may like to listen to Lutheran pastor, Rev Dr Munther Isaac explain why his church in Bethlehem has replaced the manger scene with a baby in the rubble. Watch [here](#) or [here](#).
- Christians in Palestine have prepared a [Kairos Palestine Christmas Alert](#) containing reflections, prayers and requests for solidarity.
- Distribute the Christmas Appeal envelopes and collect them as part of your Christmas celebrations
- Share special food with people as they leave.

Special thanks to Rev Mark Gibson for the liturgical material.



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