

ADVENT FOUR

LOVE



The need is clear – give water for Christmas, the essence of survival.

Please adapt this material for your place. Tanti (pictured outside the tent her family lived in) survived earthquakes and tsunami in Central Sulawesi, Indonesia. She is pleased to have safe water on tap outside her home. Supporting emergency appeals is one way of showing our love and concern for people affected by disaster and conflict.

CALL TO WORSHIP

E te whānau, dear friends in Christ,
In this season of preparation, we come together to worship our God,
The One who is love.



Christian World Service
PO Box 22652,
Christchurch 8140
0800 74 7372 christmasappeal.org.nz

Let us be restored by the living waters of God at this time.
Haere mai. Come. Rest in the living waters.
Haere mai. Come. Pray by the living waters.
Haere mai. Come. Be strengthened through the living waters.

All are welcome, you are welcome, in the name of Christ.
God's love be with you.
And also with you.

We are here to listen to God's promises.
Let us worship together in truth.

We are here to once again receive God's mercy.
Let us gather together upon this foundation of grace.

We are here as the people of God.
Let us be open to the Spirit as we gather in this place.

LIGHTING THE FOURTH ADVENT CANDLE: LOVE

Read the Partner Story from Indonesia: Share Safe Water, Save Lives

Tanti remembers the fear she felt when an earthquake destroyed her home in Central Sulawesi, Indonesia last September. She hugged her mother and ran from the house. Later a devastating tsunami hit the coast. This double disaster destroyed water and sanitation systems leaving people thirsty and at risk of disease. Safe water was the top priority.

Tanti used to spend hours a day collecting water. Now thanks to ACT Alliance there is a water tap 10 metres from her temporary home. One year later most communities have new boreholes, managed by local committees thanks to ACT Alliance. Meeting the demand for water after a disaster is the beginning of recovery.

Share safe water, save lives.

Lighting the Advent Candle of Love

Gracious God

For our brothers and sisters, battered by disaster

We ask for your protection

For those who are forgotten and in need of your healing touch

We hold them to your embrace

For the relentless pursuit of love

We light this candle.

Amen.

THE READINGS

Isaiah 7: 10-16

Reading the troubles of Ahaz is another stop on the Advent journey. His kingdom was under threat from friend and foe but when Isaiah told him to trust God he said he will not put God to the test – maybe this is another way of refusing to take good advice when it is offered. While the sign God will send despite Ahaz's disbelief is for the baby "Immanuel" or "God with Us". Even in the midst of war, there is new life.

Psalms 80: 1-7, 17-19

The psalmist pleads with God as Shepherd for salvation in the midst of war.

Romans 1:1-7

Paul begins his epistle with words of greeting that show his connection to Jesus and his ministry.

Matthew 1:18-25

This reading suggests Joseph was confused because righteousness and public opinion appeared to be in conflict. However, once in the night an angel told him what to do and with no hesitation it would seem Joseph chose to follow the way of love rather than a rigid interpretation of the law. His plans for marriage had been interrupted but he was ready to make the changes necessary to accommodate this new plan. Matthew's birth narrative is short but in it he names Jesus as Immanuel, at once linking him with Isaiah as part of our faith story.



PARTNER STORY

GIVE LOVE

Tanti will never forget the day a magnitude 7.5 earthquake knocked down her home in Palu, a city in Central Sulawesi, Indonesia.

The sixteen year old says, "I remember hugging my mum and running from our house," but it was only the beginning. After the earthquake came liquefaction and tsunami. The town's water supply and sewage system were destroyed.



Before the quake, Tanti had spent her days in school or studying but now her job became the family's water carrier. Her aunt who lived in a village further down the hill had a well, so in the first days after the quake she collected its water. She was not the only one. With no other water available and heavy demand, the well was soon dry.

Now she had to go further afield. Before the sun rose in the sky, she would walk one kilometre to the nearest water point to fill two five litre jerry cans with water. She would make this journey one or two more times each day so her family had water for drinking, cooking and washing.

In six months the family had water ten metres from their tent thanks to ACT Alliance Indonesia (Action by Churches Together of which CWS is a member), giving Tanti time to go to school, study and help her mother sell fish.

"I'm really happy. I can wake up a little later and not feel too tired at school," she adds.

Although the earthquake and tsunami struck on 28 September 2018, relief efforts continue more than a year later. Around 57,000 people remain in tents, many without safe water or latrines.

After a natural disaster and in conflict situations, people need safe water and good sanitation.

SERMON NOTES

Our journey is close to its highpoint. We can see Christmas on the horizon. We are nearly there. Is there something new this Christmas – a new person or idea that brings light to this familiar story.

It is a busy time of the year, but some people are already slowing – they may be worried about what this Christmas will bring or face great uncertainty.

Bringing together the readings and the tragedy of last year's double disaster in Central Sulawesi, focuses our attention on the need for God's saving grace. Can we find the help we need in our community?

What has kept you going on this Advent journey? Are you guided by the light ahead or by the comfort of those who travel with you? Have you found the life giving water?

We are not alone. Disaster may strike. War break out. The unexpected may happen. No matter what happens, the message is, God is with us and with every person. No one is to be left behind.



Give Water for Christmas, the essence of survival.

ADVENT LITANY

God of Water

The One who drew the water out of the formless void, gathered it together and proclaimed its goodness
Draws creation into the goodness of the water of life.

The One who parted the seas leading the promised people to freedom and safety
Parts oceans of impossibility and rivers of division.

The One who rose out of the waters of the Jordan
Brings new life, in humility, out of the depths.

The One who met the thirsting woman at the well
Is the spring welling up to eternal life.

The One who revealed the crystal river flowing from the throne into the city
Continues in faithfulness and promise towards the healing of the nations.

This is the God of Water. This is the One of whom Hagar named a spring - The Well of the Living One who sees me.

This is the God who sees me.

This is the God who calls us into the waters.

This is the God who calls us up, out of the waters, to share the waters with all.

PRAYER FOR OTHERS

Merciful God

As we walk the journey of Advent,
Help us to prepare for your coming in our hearts and in our lives.

May the love which you have shown us in Christ guide and strengthen us for our journeys.

May we rest in your love.

May we find peace in your love.

May we bring your love to the world.

Let your love descend.

We pray for those whose lives are affected by disaster and destruction. We remember, especially, our brothers and sisters who continue to suffer in Central Sulawesi, Indonesia.

May our love, as one body, reach out to those in most desperate need.

Lord God, we ask these things through the One who is the light to all people, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.

MAKE A PRAYER STATION

You may like to set up prayer stations for the season of Advent and the 2019 Christmas Appeal for people to engage with when they choose or they could be used on one-off occasions for study/home/youth groups. You could add a new station each week or swap them over. The stations are designed to be simple to set up and use materials that readily at hand in your communities.

Station Four: Small Acts of Kindness

Materials Needed

- A copy of the instructions (below) to leave with the other materials at this station
- A piece of paper (A4, A3 or A2) with a table of 24 squares drawn up (6 squares x 4 squares)
- Felt pens

Instructions

There are 24 days in Advent this year. Choose one of the 24 empty squares in the grid on the piece of paper in front of you and write down a small act of kindness you (or someone else) might commit to for the season of Advent. This act may be something you can do every day such as 'smile at a neighbour' or it could be a one-off act of kindness such as 'phoning someone you know who is lonely.'

When you have done this, you may like to pray the following prayer:

Merciful God,
In this season of preparation,
as we look towards the birth of the Christ-child,
Grant that we may also prepare our own hearts
and make ready your way.

Help us to seek your path,
And even if this leads us into the wilderness,
guide us towards your light.
Amen.

BENEDICTION

Go out to the world and share the love of Christ.

We go out in love, knowing that is God who strengthens and guides us in his light.

NOTES

Special thanks to Tanti for sharing her story. Thanks to the staff of Church World Service, a member of ACT Alliance Indonesia, for the stories and visuals, and Alice Bates for her work on the liturgy.

SUPPORT THE CHRISTMAS APPEAL.

