

ADVENT THREE

JOY



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

Please adapt this material for your place. Small farmers like Miguel (pictured left) are happy because they have new skills and equipment to grow enough food in Nicaragua, one of the country's most affected by climate change .

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 joy.

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.



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God's joy 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 THIRD ADVENT CANDLE: JOY

Read Partner Story from Nicaragua: Recycle Water, Give Life

Miguel is proud of his garden, which now sustains his family in Nicaragua. He has lost many crops to drought and the family had one meal a day. "We had to ration food," he says.

He is glad to be part of an agricultural programme run by CEPAD, the Council of Protestant Churches. Installing a new irrigation system means he can grow more food and save the time it took to walk to the river. He has learned to use compost, mulch and all the grey water he can. The seeds and plants provide new vegetables and fruit. Always a very kind man, he is eager to share what he learns with others.

Years of poor harvests have left small farmers with no buffer against drought. They want to learn new farming skills and drink safe water.

Recycle water, give life.

Lighting the Advent Candle of Joy

Gracious God
For foundations of joy and delight in the Lord

We give you thanks and praise

For situations where it is painful to rejoice

We ask for your wisdom

For the relentless pursuit of your joy

We light this candle.

Amen.

THE READINGS

Isaiah 35:1-10

Read this text from a place where water is in short supply to find the joy of this third Sunday in Advent. There is joy on this Advent journey, a joy to be shared with others and to be found in singing.

Psalms 146:5-10 or Luke 1:46b-55

These texts spark joy, the joy experienced when all people have water, food and justice. No one is to be left – not hungry people, prisoners, stranger, organs, widows. Find joy on this Advent journey with those who are missing out.

James 5:7-10

The reading urges patience and tolerance. Walking this journey with farmers who need water will strengthen our hearts.

Matthew 11:2-11

John is in prison and uncertain of what was happening so he sent messengers to Jesus. By way of response Jesus sent back word of what he had been doing, restoring sight, healing people who could not walk, and sharing good news with poor people. Justice and healing prevail in this Advent journey which shall be marked by concrete action.



In Nicaragua, small farmer Miguel is learning how to grow food in new ways. He lives with his wife and mother in a small house on a few acres near Teustepe, about two hours bus drive from the capital, Managua .

Once he could depend on the rain to grow enough to feed his family. Now the extremes of weather are making farming challenging. Without careful care his crops would not survive.



“We had to ration food and only grew corn, beans, yuca (cassava) and malanga (a root crop related to taro),” he says.

Like many rural Nicaraguans, they were reduced to eating one meal a day and spending hours carrying water from the river when it flowed. Life was grim and they could see no way out. So when CEPAD the Council of Protestant Churches offered to help their community, Miguel was keen to be involved.

In the four years since CEPAD first set up their village development committee, he has made huge gains. With their help, he has a small irrigation system, piping water from the nearby river through large barrels to get through the dry seasons. Miguel captures more rain in a large hole lined with a tarpaulin. With the hoses he got from CEPAD plus recycled plastic bottles, he drip feeds water to the roots of his plants.

CEPAD has given him seeds and plants. Around the house, the family grows mostly squash, herbs and plantains. Further away, they have planted guava, banana palms, pineapples, oranges, lemons and plums to grow alongside his staple crops. Now the family eats fresh fruit and is so much happier.

Always a very kind man, Miguel is eager to share what he has learned.

“A thousand thank yous. Our way of life has improved greatly,” he says.

SERMON NOTES

The Advent journey takes us closer to people who do not have the water, food and justice they need. The Bible readings provide a storehouse of promise to people in need of the resources they need to live well and those who hold on to the dream of a fairer world. Listen for the joy that breaks out when people get what God gives for us all.

Nicaragua is on the frontline of the climate emergency. It is the sixth country [most affected](#) by climate change in the last 20 years. We can help people living on the frontline by giving what we can as well as pushing for stronger policies and practices.

Who are we taking on our Advent journey? What voices are we listening to? How are we travelling?

We are not alone. Through history, millions of people have shared this journey and we can pass the story along. We follow the summer sun this Advent. Walking together we can find the light of Christ and the joy of a vision where no one is 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 your joy be our sure foundation, a joy that does not wither or fade away.
May we rejoice in this day.
May we rejoice in our salvation.
May we rejoice in the hope of our faith.
Let your joy descend.

We pray with those who are joyful. We rejoice in the life-giving goodness springing out of the irrigated gardens of Nicaragua. We pray with those who do not experience joy. May we stand alongside people who are downtrodden, disheartened and distressed.

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 Three: Stories of Hope

Materials needed

- A copy of the instructions (below) to leave with the other materials at this station
- A copy of the short CWS Christmas [Appeal Partner Stories](#)
- Paper and pens

Instructions

Read the [short stories](#) (HOPE, PEACE, JOY, LOVE, CHRIST CANDLE). Write or draw a prayer of thanksgiving for the work that is already being done to bring clean water to those who have none. Pray, also, for those people who are still in desperate need. Take this prayer home and hang it somewhere you will see it every day. Every time you see your prayer, let it be a reminder to continue in our prayers of thanksgiving for works of hope. You may also use this visual reminder as a prompt to pray for those who need hope throughout this Advent season.

BENEDICTION

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

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

NOTES

Special thanks to Miguel for sharing his story. Thanks to the staff of CEPAD for the stories and visuals, and Alice Bates for her work on the liturgy.

SUPPORT THE CHRISTMAS APPEAL.

