

ADVENT TWO

PEACE



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

Please adapt this material for your place. South Indian fisherfolk want access to their traditional livelihoods and lifestyles without having to fight government and business at every turn.

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 peace.

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 peace 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 SECOND ADVENT CANDLE: PEACE

Read Partner Story from South India: Protect Water, Give Life

The sounds are loud on a South Indian beach. Fisherfolk spend their days mending nets, helping the boats come and go, gathering seafood and seaweed or making snacks to sell. There is much chatter, and the smell of fresh fish and the ocean is everywhere.

Further up the coast, there is only the sound of the sea lapping against an empty beach, home to a massive power plant where the people cannot go. Like Meenakshi, a seaweed diver, they want access to the sea that sustains their life. Working with Neythal, the fisherfolk are monitoring the coast so they can use the results as evidence in legal proceedings. They want to protect their homes and livelihoods for their children.

Protect water, give life.

Lighting the Advent Candle of Peace

Gracious God

For division, disunity, discouragement and despair

We turn to you to overcome

For those who seek justice and safety

We look to you to protect

For the relentless pursuit of your peace

We light this candle.

Amen.

THE READINGS

Isaiah 11:1-10

Isaiah portrays a time of divine justice, the necessary precursor to peace. Note in verse 4, the clear statement that God's interest is with the poor and the meek. Poor people

will be judged with righteousness – no blaming the poor for the ills of society here. The meek will be treated with equity. The consequence of this rearrangement of power is the profound peace and harmony found in the later verses. Without justice there can be no peace.

Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19

The psalmist shows what good government looks like – the measure is whether there is justice for the poor. This priority for justice is at the core of the Jewish faith from which Christianity has grown.

Romans 15: 4-13

Paul's message is one of openness and welcome to all people.

Matthew 3: 1-12

In the desert the place of testing we find John the Baptist proclaiming a different way. He does not make it easy and his words may seem harsh. For John actions are important – he condemns the powerful people of his time for appealing to their status instead of repenting for what they have done. The axe is at the root of the tree that bears no fruit.



PARTNER STORY

GIVE PEACE

From the time she was ten years old, Meenakshi has collected seaweed off India's coast at the Gulf of Mannar. Wearing her sari, she dives deep into the ocean plucking the seaweed from underwater rocks, stones and dead coral. Now she has turned 55

and with her children grown, she and her husband who is a seafarer depend on the seaweed to survive.

On the days they harvest, she gets up at 4 am to prepare breakfast before arriving for work at 7 am. Men operate the small boats that take them to the islands for the 15 days a month they work - allowing time for regeneration between expeditions. The women use nets to collect 25-30 kg a day, which they dry for three days while they stay on the island. They sell the dry seaweed for 33 cents a kilogram, down from 44 cents before GST was introduced. During the two-month ban on fishing starting in April, the men receive relief payments from the government but there is none for the women.

The Gulf of Mannar is a rich source of sea life and home to over 4,223 species of flora and fauna. In 2002 the government declared it a Marine Biosphere, banning the collection of seaweed. It took two years for the 2,000 women to win the permits needed to collect seaweed. The women depend on the seaweed for their livelihood and argue there is no regulation against bottom trawling and the use of destructive fishing gear and boats, which are much more destructive.

One of the uninhabited islands has lost 2-3 hectares of coast from erosion and in the last 50 years, the sea surface temperature in the Gulf has risen about 0.3 degrees. Coral disease and bleaching are increasing.

Meenashki says the women know how to protect the mangroves and seaweed for generations to come if the government would let them. She was one of two women to receive a best leadership award for their fight to attain rights for Women Seaweed collectors.

She is a member of the Tamil Nadu Women Fisherworkers *sangam* or association, set up to protect their working rights. The women have learned to organise petitions and lobby government officials to press for access to the coast. Dependent on the coast for their livelihoods, the 915,000 fisherfolk who make it their home have watched rapid changes— the fishing catch is much smaller, the beaches more badly eroded and storms more frequent and intense.

“As our coast is flooded with industrial and infrastructure projects [like power plants, they have destroyed the mangrove forests, polluted the coastal water bodies including creeks and estuaries. If a proposed tourist project goes ahead, we will not be permitted to collect



seaweed. We will be displaced slowly,” says Meenakshi.

Meenakshi knows the importance of protecting the coast but not for power plants and large-scale aquaculture.

SERMON NOTES

John’s words are familiar and yet their bluntness still has the power to confront us with their demands. On our Advent journey, there is time to stop in the desert with John to reexamine our lives. Are we listening to the poor and standing with those whose voices are not heard? If we do not listen, we will miss the voices of indigenous peoples who have been pushed to the edge of their lands and sea. Who will help Meenakshi take the case to court and support her right to a livelihood in a vulnerable environment? It is easier to blame her and the other seaweed collectors than take on the giants for the destruction they cause.

Where are the places that need access to water for their livelihoods?

Are we heading towards justice and peace for all peoples on this our Advent journey?

We are not there yet. We follow in the way that John has prepared, looking towards the light of Christ. No half measures but a challenge to pick up the pace and focus on people who want and deserve the essentials of life.

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 we dare to pray for your peace, to trust that your goodness overcomes all.

May your peace be seen in unexpected places.

May your peace come to places of division and destruction in our own lives.

May your peace endure.

Let your peace descend.

We pray for a peaceful future for the fishermen, fisherwomen and children of South
India. As they seek legal resolution, may your justice prevail. May peace be brought to
these people, their lands and waters.

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
swop them over. The stations are designed to be simple to set up and use materials
that readily at hand in your communities.*

Station Two: Christ, Be Our Light

Materials needed

- A copy of the instructions (below) to leave with the other materials at this station
- A bowl or tray filled with sand
- Tea light candles
- Matches

Instructions

What things in the world would you like to see change? Where would you like to see the light of Christ break through? Who do you know who is in desperate need of hope, peace, joy or love? Light a candle and say a prayer for these situations and people.

BENEDICTION

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

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

NOTES

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SUPPORT THE CHRISTMAS APPEAL.

