

CHRISTMAS DAY



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

Please adapt this material for your place. A young mother and child need safe water for good health. On this special day, we celebrate the baby Jesus, born in Palestine. Every new child is a gift of God and has a right to life-giving water. At Christmas, we glimpse God in the eyes of a child. Let us share the good news on this special day.

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 the Christ.



Christian World Service
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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 Son 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 CHRIST CANDLE

Read the Partner Story from Palestine: Give Good Water, Give Life

It would not be Christmas without a baby! A young Palestinian mother wants her young son to have a good life despite the many hurdles he will face.

Clean, safe water is essential for baby's health, and in short supply. Families must buy safe water to drink. The lack of safe water threatens the health of many families.

For Syrian and Palestinian refugees access to primary healthcare for mothers and children up to age six is a special gift. Regular check ups and vaccinations with doctors and other medical staff make sure new babies get a good start to life. Free medical care and supplementary food at DSPR's primary health clinics make the difference for people facing an uncertain future.

Give good health, give life.

Lighting the Christ Candle

E te whānau, brothers and sisters,
Christ is born anew among us today!
Gracious God, on this most holy of days,
May Christ be our light.
For the life that was the light of all people
We light this candle.
Amen.

THE READINGS

Isaiah 52: 6-12

Today we reach the end point of the journey. The mountains are beautiful. We have reached home and it is time for celebration. Jerusalem may be in ruins, but the people will return from exile. The messenger announces peace. Everyone will see God's salvation.

Psalm 98

The celebration is echoed in this psalm of salvation. The whole of creation joins in this happy noisemaking – no one is left behind. Salvation comes with righteousness and equity for all people.

Hebrews 1: 1-4 (5-12)

The writer of Hebrews places Jesus in history, linking him back to the beginning of the world and at the right hand of God.

John 1: 1-14

These familiar words encapsulate our understanding of God as involved in the world and our histories. Words of life and light offer us a glimpse of what is possible with God. In church we listen to these words together with others – they are to be shared. The message of Christmas is life-giving for everyone.

PARTNER STORY

GIVE GOOD WATER, GIVE LIFE



Her name could have been Mary but it is not. She lives in the south of Gaza not that far from Bethlehem. She has a new baby but there is not enough food. The baby girl named Niveen is not growing well. Niveen's mother knows she needs help, or she will die. She has no money and life is marked by suffering and misery.

Desperate for her daughter now 18 months old, she takes Niveen to the medical clinic at Rafah run by the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees even though she has no money.

"I can hardly find the food to feed my family. I try to cope by cooking cheap food or use the rice and lentils from the government rations. I can't afford to buy nutritious food. I feel guilty because my inappropriate feeding practices contributed to her illness," says her mother.

The doctor said Niveen was suffering from severe malnutrition and anaemia and prescribed various medications and vitamins. Her mother was grateful for the help and the opportunity to learn about better nutrition.

The family of seven live in a very poor neighbourhood. Their house has one room, a small hall and a tiny area used as a kitchen. A traditional toilet is attached to the house which is hot in the sun, cold in the winter and leaks in the rain. They have an old table and fridge but no other furniture. Once her father worked as a casual labourer but like many men in Gaza now has no work – unemployment is close to 46.7%. They depend on a small government pension, food rations and the occasional assistance from Niveen’s grandfather. Water is in short supply.

“By the fourth visit, the nurse informed me that my child’s weight and haemoglobin had returned to normal. I was so happy. I will continue to visit the clinic until my daughter reaches the age of six years,” she concludes.

Life is not easy for many Palestinian and Syrian refugees. Years of conflict and few opportunities have pushed them to the limits of their resourcefulness. Mothers face each day with dread as they calculate how to manage the shrinking rations and emergency assistance they get. There are few opportunities for employment and living conditions are cramped. Malnutrition is rising and many more children have been traumatised by their experiences. The need is clear.

(Note the image is not Nirveen, but another baby attending the well baby clinic. Her mother was happy to share her story but not her image.)

SERMON NOTES

We have reached the end of our journey. In Martin Luther King’s [final speech](#) he said the famous words for which it is named, “I have been to the mountaintop”. Through Advent we have journeyed to the mountains, but what have we seen? Have we rediscovered a vision of the world as a place for all people? Where everyone has water?

Christmas is here. It is a celebration of light and life for everyone. Some like to celebrate with much noise while others prefer to connect quietly with others. No one should be alone who does not want to be. We can make this happen here at church.

Christmas is the ultimate celebration of sharing. Our faith grows out of the faith of those who have come before us. How can we pass it on? Can you find new ways to share what gives light to your life and to the world?

Let us share what we can so babies like Niveen born in Gaza, can have water in life. Please give generously to this year’s Christmas Appeal. The need is clear.

When mothers come to the Well Baby Clinic, they are given a vitamin drink for their children – pictured below.



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 celebrate the light of Christmas

Help us to celebrate your coming in our hearts and in our lives.

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

May we rest in your light.

May we find peace in your light.

May we bring your light to the world.

Let us share it with those who need justice and healing.

We pray for mothers and babies who need water and good medical care. We remember, especially all mothers and babies in Palestine, those who are refugees or live in places of violence and despair.

May our light, as one body, reach out to those in most desperate need of water and light.

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 Five: God of Water

Materials needed

- A copy of the instructions (below) to leave with the other materials at this station
- A copy of the poem (below) to leave with the other materials at this station
- A large sheet of paper (at least A3 in size)
- Felt pens, crayons and/or coloured pencils in all shades of BLUE

Instructions

Spend some time meditating on the litany above. Use the blue pens/crayons/colouring pencils to draw your response to the poem. You are contributing to a group response as others who work on this prayer station will draw their responses on the same sheet of paper.

BENEDICTION

Go out to the world and share Christ, the light of the world.

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

NOTES

Special thanks to Niveen, her mother and DSPR for sharing this story. Thanks to DSPR and Paul Jeffrey for the visuals, and Alice Bates for her work on the liturgy. Alice has completed the final year of her Bachelor of Theology degree. She has been a children's, youth and young adults' worker and administrator at St Michael's and All Angels Church, Christchurch and is currently travelling.

SUPPORT THE CHRISTMAS APPEAL.

