



Christian
World Service



Hope: Hungry for Fair Wages

Today is the first Sunday of the church new year, the beginning of Advent. It is a time of watching and waiting as we prepare to celebrate Christmas. In this year that has been different from any other, what do we as a church hope for? Where do we see God at work in our world? How can we share God's love with our neighbours who do not have enough food for the day?

CALL TO WORSHIP

In this season of expectation
of hope renewed
we come together in community
made sacred by our presence
in the spirit of our hope.

LIGHTING OUR ADVENT CANDLE OF HOPE

Today we remember 75 years of Christian World Service's Christmas Appeals. We celebrate the work of our aid Agency in the provision of hope in our world.

Our first Advent candle speaks to our hunger for hope,
it speaks to our world's hunger for hope.
Rasu has hope that she might grow food to improve her family's diet.
(Light the candle)

This candle represents the future that is full of possibilities for a new way of living as we dream our dreams.

We are hungry for hope.



Rasu and her three children stand proudly outside their home on the tea plantation. They want to be treated fairly and to have what they need to live well.

Partner Story:

I pick tea but cannot yet grow food

Rasu picks tea in Sri Lanka. She climbs the steep hills, plucking a few leaves from each bush to put in the sack around her head. It is hard work and the pay is not good. She has to buy all the food for her family from the plantation store but she dreams of starting a small mushroom farm so she can improve their diet and earn money for school and medical costs. If only she could have a small patch of land to grow food and a living wage, her family would do better. We are hungry for hope.

You may like to add a bowl of tea leaves to your Advent wreath to remember the tea pickers.

LECTIONARY THOUGHTS

The theme for this Sunday is hope. Each passage for this day points to a hope that broken relationships can be restored; an expectation that something good will incarnate into the world. Our faith and responsibility is to live and work as if something momentous is about to occur. 75 years of Christian World Service and its Christmas Appeal is one way to focus on how we might respond to the incarnation we are about to celebrate.

Isaiah 64:1-9

This passage indicates a separation between God and God's people. It is a lament that this primary relationship is broken. Yet in the last verse we have this wonderful affirmation "... we are your people."

Psalms 80:1-7, 17-19

In the psalm there is a strong sense that a broken relationship has meant God caused difficulties to fall upon the people. It is, however, to God the psalmist calls out to for salvation.

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

While Paul starts with a warm greeting he is about to launch into a critique on the Corinthian Community's self-deception and overly inflated pride.

Mark 13:24-37

In the reading in Isaiah there is an expectation that God would respond to the people's plight. In Mark the disciples are asked to wait for something momentous to occur. In the Mark passage we hear Jesus advising his disciples to keep watch, to be alert. The specifics about what and when this will happen remain unclear.

Partner Story: I pick tea but I cannot grow enough food

When you first meet Rasu, you can see she is a hardworking woman. Her well-toned muscles and strong hands are used to lifting heavy loads and



Rasu picks tea leaves. Her wages are low and her living and working conditions are unfair. She cannot always feed her family. She is hungry for hope.

long days of toil. She supports her family by working as a tea picker on one of Sri Lanka's tea plantations and with what she can grow in her tiny garden. With better pay or a little more support, she may be able to escape the grim reality of daily poverty. Sometimes it takes only a little investment to start a small business.

"Greetings! My name is Rasu. I am 42 years old. I have studied up to A-Levels at school. I have three children and they are going to school now. My husband does not have a permanent job. He gets paid occasionally for his labour.

After schooling I started growing vegetables and took care of goats. But with frequent attacks from wild boars in recent times, I discontinued farming and started work on a tea estate."

One thing that has changed little since tea was first taken to Sri Lanka by the British, is the harvesting of tea. The most delicate tea grows on its mountain slopes and is picked by hand. Every seven to 14 days, the tea pickers walk between the bushes, deftly picking the new buds on its branches. Their goal is to fill the tarpaulin bags on their back with 18 kilograms of the highly prized leaves. During lockdown, they worked often without access to water or sanitation to maintain one of the country's leading exports.

Rasu says she picks tea when the leaves are ready. Normally she has work for 20 days a month but when growth is slow, for only 12 days. In the best months she earns around Rs 15,000 (NZ\$121.74) but her income can be as little as Rs 3,000 (NZ\$24.35). It is not enough to feed her family.

But Rasu has hope. A while ago she attended a small business course on growing mushrooms. She started by selling them to other women who worked on the tea estate, but they could not always pay her. Instead she tried to sell them to local shops, but could not meet the high production standards required by local authorities. Fortunately the estate where she works allows residents to grow vegetables but some days they do not have enough to eat.

Rasu knows she can feed her family with a little more income. CWS partner MONLAR is campaigning for improved wages and better conditions for tea pickers and other plantation workers. It is a network of 47 local farmers' organisations and individuals working to regenerate the land and its people.

More information on MONLAR and tea picking can be found [here](#).

INTERCESSION

We give thanks for 75 years of Christian World Service.

Rasu hopes for the day that she might start her own mushroom farm or earn a living wage to better care for her family.

The world hungers for hope.

We hunger for hope.

BLESSING

In this season of expectation
we go from this place to be the hope for the world.
The world hungers for hope.

We hunger for hope.

Amen.

Activity

Take time out at the beginning of Advent with a tea party. Bring fancy tablecloths, flowers for the table, proper tea cups and fair trade tea, real teapots and traditional morning tea fare. Children could set this up and make classic sandwiches during the service. If they are old enough, perhaps they could help serve. Someone might like to say grace, giving thanks for the tea pickers and the work they do.

For Discussion

Talk about the ethics of food. Does it matter to you how it is grown, prepared, consumed or wasted?

Where does our food come from? Share some food stories from the Scripture – how do they speak to us about food?

We share hope with those who are hungry this Christmas.

When I was hungry

Support the 2020 Christmas Appeal to give hungry families good food and the basics of a sustainable life.



Christian World Service

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christmasappeal.org.nz