



Christian World Service



Advent Two:

Peace



Today is the second Sunday of Advent. Our waiting today will not be quiet. The words of John the Baptist are a call to action, "Prepare the Way of the Lord". In these few words, he tells us that we have not been paying enough attention. We cannot sit back and ask God to stop the violence in our world or feed the hungry without action. Listen for words that speak to people who are longing for peace. Who are these people? How can we prepare the way of peace in our homes, our community, our world?



Jenty and her children have seen too much violence. She has planted a new garden and prays for their protection.

CALL TO WORSHIP

In this season of expectation
of peace and reconciliation
we come together in community
made sacred by our presence
in the spirit of peace.

LIGHTING OUR ADVENT CANDLE OF PEACE

Today we remember 75 years of Christian World Service's Christmas Appeals. We celebrate the work of our Aid Agency in its work for peace in our world.

Our Second Advent candle speaks to our hunger for peace, it speaks to our world's hunger for peace.

Jenty lost her husband and home due to conflict and longs for peace.

(Light the candle)

The candle represents that the future is full of peaceful possibilities for a new way of living as we dream of peace.
We are hungry for peace.

Partner Story:

I lost my husband and my home due to conflict

Jenty knows what it is like to be hungry and afraid. Conflict has rippled through her home in South Sudan since it was founded in 2011. This time she fled on foot with her children to Maridi a fast-growing town on one of the new country's few roads. They arrived with nothing but the community always welcomes people displaced by the conflict. She is proud of her garden and the maize she has planted. Food grows well here. Let us pray that peace will take root in South Sudan.

We are hungry for peace.

You may like to add a small hoe or other garden to remember displaced people.

LECTIONARY THOUGHTS

The theme for this Sunday is peace. Our readings for this day continue to build on our expectation for the incarnation. Specifically they speak of exiles returning home, of reconciliation between God and God's people, living life in a reconciled world and preparation for the incarnation. Christian World Service's 75th Christmas Appeal encourages us to explore how we might encourage a more humane and peaceful world.

Isaiah 40:1-11

In this passage Isaiah speaks of the expectation that something wonderful is about to occur, the return from exile in Babylon to Jerusalem. While it is right and good for the people to celebrate their return home, those who had remained behind had followed a different path. This was to have implications for two people's subsequent histories.

Psalms 85:1-2, 8-13

In this psalm, we have a wonderful affirmation and celebration of relationship being restored. Its language is hopeful and both broad and intimate. Together God and the people look forward to good times. Expectations are running high.

2 Peter 3:8-15a

In Peter we have echoes of Psalm 85. In our passage from 2 Peter there is an explanation as to why the realm of love has not yet come. God is patient. To God a single day is like thousands of years in our time. The message to the people is to live lives as if the realm of love is present now. We are not looking for an escape from this world but for life in a reconciled world.

Mark 1:1-8

In this passage we have Mark's incarnation story. John the Baptist in our tradition prepares the way for Jesus. The people who hear John's call to repentance journey through a rite of passage, baptism in water. John points to the one who will baptise in spirit.



Local Maridi women cook maize to share.

Partner Story:

Jenty's warm smile hides a life of suffering and pain. She is grateful to the local people in a village in Maridi County who have given her and her children shelter.

In February this year she fled her home in Landili Payam (next layer down from a county) when the army chased rebel soldiers who had come to her village.

Life was always hard. Last year her husband left her for another woman, leaving her pregnant and with four children to raise by herself. She had good land and could grow enough to feed her children, although it was a struggle. When the war came to her community, she had no choice but to flee.

"We survived with our hoes and the soil that we dug by hand in Landili," she said.

In February, she and her five children arrived in Maridi after walking on foot for seven days along with thousands of others who had fled the conflict.

"The already difficult life became worse. I reached here alone with the children, no one to build a house for me or support me in caring for the children. I got this small old house that I pay some small rent to stay in with my children. I struggle to feed and provide medication for my children single handed. It is tough for me, but I have to struggle," she says.

When they fled the family had to rely on wild food like yams and leaves but sometimes there was nothing to eat. Seeing her plight, the local people allocated her a small plot of land, asking MSA to help.

This land is the only source of food for her family. It will provide some food and much-needed cash now she has a hoe, slasher and a *panga* or machete and vegetable seeds to plant from MSA. Before this help, she had only a small old hoe that a neighbour gave her.

Jenty is not the only mother needing garden tools, some seeds and gardening support. MSA wants to help 300 more mothers start their own gardens. A staff member will provide agricultural support to this new group. This year's Christmas Appeal will contribute to these costs and all of MSA's work.

"My message to the people of New Zealand is thank you so much for helping us, the single mothers and widows in Maridi. I request you to keep helping us with small capital to start businesses and also do our farming.

Jenty's crops are growing and because of MSA's support she is confident for the future. Her plea is for other women like her to have the same opportunity.

INTERCESSION

We give thanks for 75 years of Christian World Service.

Jenty knows what it is like to go hungry and what it means to be afraid in times of conflict and violence. She longs for peace.

The world hungers for peace.

We hunger for peace.



The people of Maridi do what they can to provide a safe place by welcoming people who come in peace.

BLESSING

In this season of expectation
we go from this place to be the peace for the
world.

The world hungers for peace.

We hunger for peace.

Amen.

Activity

Today is the day to plant seeds of peace. Bring poppy or other seeds, potting mix and small pots. Invite everyone to plant and care for their seed in the coming weeks. Alternatively you might have a patch of church ground you could turn into a peace garden – grow some vegetables or flowers to share.

You could invite someone to be a modern day John the Baptist. The person needs some odd clothes (sack cloth perhaps) and to be able to shout without listening. Instead of marching on a riverbank, he/she could walk deliberately up and down the aisle offering to baptise anyone willing to take the plunge. It could end with an invitation to join in a planting activity or a banner making activity. The banners could be simple slogans

about people and places that need violence to end – or beautiful illustrations in answer to the question, Prepare the Way for what?

For Discussion

What are the consequences of war? Peace Movement Aotearoa has a [campaign](#) on Military spending that includes links to international expenditure as well as national figures. Pick out some figures to share and discuss.

Sing or listen to “Hark the Herald Angels Sing”. When you sing the words “Peace on Earth” what did you think of? Share some images or places where people need peace.

The people of Isaiah lived in exile much as Jenty in our story or other displaced people. They were cut off from their homes and had to make a new life in an unfamiliar culture. Life was hard and they could not get ahead. Like many refugees they longed to go home, and God did answer their prayers. South Sudan is the third largest refugee crisis in the world. More than 4 million have fled their homes. What do you know about South Sudan? Refugees? The churches are active brokers of peace in South Sudan. Their leaders actively resolve local disputes and meet with political leaders at the national level. What can we learn from them about peacemaking? (Note: [Peace Sunday](#) materials have some examples.)

Who are the people calling us to make our world



The Baka people of Maridi display traditional tools and crafts.

safer? the modern day John the Baptists? Share stories of when you might have made a call for peace. Older people may like to talk about the campaign to ban nuclear weapons or you could talk about Parihaka or a local story of conflict. Try to open up spaces for dialogue rather than blame. John the Baptist confronts us with the need for action and commitment.

Where might we find peace in our broken world?

We share peace 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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