



Christian  
World Service



## Advent Four:

# Love

**Our Food Bank is for  
anyone who is hungry**

Christmas is very close. On the fourth Sunday Advent we are watching and waiting. Today there is time to pause and reflect before we are caught up in the practical details of Christmas festivities. God's love is bigger than we can imagine. It is love to be shared freely with others. Where do we see love at work in our community? Can we weave love into our Christmas celebrations? 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 love shared  
we come together in community  
made sacred by our presence  
in the spirit of love.

### 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 labouring for love in our world.

Our Fourth Advent candle speaks to our hunger for love, it speaks to our world's hunger for love.  
We have a Food Bank for all who are in need.  
(Light the candle)

The candle represents a future of love-filled possibilities for a new way of living where love is real.

**We are hungry for love.**



*"Every donation makes a huge contribution to the quality of life for our residents," said Jane Grey, Senior Carer at the Father Law Home, a beneficiary of the Food Bank.*

### Partner Story:

*We have a Food Bank for all who are in need*

Frances is in charge of the new Food Bank in Fiji. She can't grow enough cabbage and tomato on this church land for all those who have limited food options but she can show others what to do. During Covid-19, it is important for people to eat fresh food to boost their immunity and stay healthy, she says. We cannot feed everyone but we can make them think. We share God's love by giving people seeds to take home and caring for creation. We are hungry for love.

*You may like to add some young vegetable plants to your Advent wreath to remember those who grow food.*

## LECTIONARY THOUGHTS

Advent Four encourages us to engage with the theme of love. The lectionary readings can be disturbing. The first two readings point us to God's failure to follow through on promises made to David. While the first section of the Psalm is upbeat, the verses that are left out of this selection call God out for not protecting David's throne forever. We should not be surprised as loving relationships come up against situations and tensions that need to be worked through. Love can mean walking difficult and hard paths. We hear of Mary who is prepared to walk a terrible path in her response to the God of the poor and marginalised. Christian World Service's 75th Christmas Appeal invites us to share God's love by working towards ending hunger.

### 2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

In this story David wants to improve the housing of the ark of God. Nathan as the spokesperson for God tells David that he should do this for God is with him. But reading on we find this is not the case. God does not want a 'house of cedar'. God does affirm David. God promises that David's throne will be established forever. However this promise is not kept. The House of David falls.

### Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26

This psalm is paired with 2 Samuel's story of God's Covenant with David. It is a psalm of praise and adulation. It is festive and upbeat. It is however a set up. In the verses not included in the lectionary (vv.38-45) the psalmist accuses God of breaking the promise to David. Later the psalmist calls upon God to remember the promise made (vv.49-52).

### Romans 16:25-27

To Paul the great divide in humanity was the division between Jew and Gentile. This division, in his mind, was reconciled in Jesus Christ. But his vision isn't realised. Judaism and Christianity follow different paths. Human divisions are not always easily reconciled. The 'us' and the 'them' is a powerful dynamic in human history. It reminds us that the Church is a flawed institution, it was flawed from the beginning. Paul's hope failed.



*The smell of the swamp envelopes Nanuku Settlement, where Aarav lives.*

### Luke 1:26-38

Mark's Gospel doesn't have the familiar birth narrative of Matthew and Luke and so it is to Luke that we turn in this Advent Season for the beginning of the Christmas story.

Gabriel tells Mary that she is to give birth. Mary knows this cannot be as she is still a virgin and she asks how this will happen. The angel skirts the question and simply says the power of the Most High will cause the child to be born. Mary consents to bearing the child of the Most High. She agrees to enter into what can be considered a disreputable condition. There is nothing meek and mild about this woman.

---

### Partner Story: Our Food Bank is for Anyone who is Hungry

Most days, Aarav steps out his front door and jumps across the rickety planks that protect residents from the swamp below. He is heading to school 1.5 kilometres away.

Today the smile on his face is bright. Not only is this the last day of the school week, but it is the day he will receive a nutritious lunch. His tummy will be full and he will have energy to learn.

Aarav lives in the Nanuku Settlement, home to 300 families on the outskirts of Suva. He shares a tiny home, made of scavenged timber and corrugated iron, with his mother, Sheila, and three sisters. In Nanuku, the sound of the ocean is constant - sometimes waves lap against the floorboards of their home. The smell of the swamp is always present.

Some days there is not enough food and Aarav and his family go hungry. Life could be tough before but with the Covid-19 pandemic, it has become harder. Sheila is worried about the future. Without tourism, much of the economy has disappeared.

For Aarav hope has come in the form of the Pacific Conference of Churches' Food Bank – a bank for the people, grown as a model to be copied – and the Vunilagi Book Club based in a church near Nanuku. Three days a week, he races to the local church knowing he can get a free lunch.

About 30 children attend the Book Club each Saturday where they can learn to read in English, Fiji's official language. English is a second – sometimes third – language for children living in the settlement. Reading is just one of the problems. Food for school lunches is a more pressing need in a community in which parents have been laid off as the economy shrinks.

"We're so grateful that our children can go to school and have a healthy meal. If the kids don't have lunch, other children make fun of them and they don't feel like going to class," says Sheila his mother.

To support the children, PCC staff have planted tomatoes, cabbages, cauliflower, beans and cucumber in a garden next door to the Education Ministry headquarters, across the road from the Office of the Prime Minister and in plain sight of the United Nations agencies. Every Wednesday afternoon they work in their downtown garden, sharing produce, seeds and garden advice to anyone who needs them. Their beautiful garden is an expression of their faith and a source of food for school lunches. Sometimes there are eggs,



*"If we claim to be Christians, let's walk the talk. Plant and share food and become miracle workers in the lives of others," says Frances Namoumou who runs the Food Bank. Aarav and his sister look forward to eating lunch at school today.*

sausages and the occasional chicken to add to the meal.

Food is one of the most basic human rights. It is a gift to be shared and enjoyed. We can make sure children have food and challenge economic systems that make people hungry.

Every time PCC gives Aarav food, love goes around. PCC is spreading the gardening message so families can feed themselves no matter what happens. With more love, justice can grow.

---

## INTERCESSION

We give thanks for 75 years of Christian World Service.

The Covid-19 pandemic has sent economies into recession.

In Fiji, heavily dependent on the tourist dollar, families are struggling.

Frances manages the Pacific Conference of Churches' Food Bank which provides food for the children of Nanuku and encourages families and churches to grow fresh food. Through their efforts love is made known.

The world hungers for love.

**We hunger for love.**

## BLESSING

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

The world hungers for love.

**We hunger for love.**

**Amen.**

---

## Activity

Share Christmas with your neighbours. You may like to invite them to join your Christmas Day service. You could make cards or decorate a printed invitation which people could sign personally... Put them in an envelope... "You are invited to..." Make them beautiful. You could add a biscuit, wrapped Santa Claus chocolate or something you have made. After church drop them in people's letter boxes.

Or play a short food game. Make a list of favourite foods and ask people to stand up every time a favourite food is called out. See what food people love the most.

---

## For Discussion

Talk about the love of food. Can you share a story of a magical meal that you have experienced?

We are preparing for Christmas. What food will you eat? What does it mean to share this meal?



*"Give us Life" Psalm 80: 18b*

Covid-19 has changed everything. The World Bank [estimated](#) that 150 million more people will be hungry. God wants us all to experience 'the fullness of life'. How can we respond to this news with love? Are there ways we can enjoy food and share some with others?

**We share love 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**

*donate now*

[christmasappeal.org.nz](http://christmasappeal.org.nz)