



Christian World Service

Advent Five:

Christmas

Love in Action



Happy Christmas! The watching and waiting are over. It is time for love to be shared. Through the service today, we are reminded that the world can change and love can prevail. Christmas is the day we bring gifts for each other and those who are in need. Your gift to this year's Christmas Appeal, will help families struggling to feed their children especially in this pandemic. Thank you!



Local knowledge means ACT Alliance members can help when disaster strikes. Ninety year old Karma and her disabled son receive hot meals three times a week in their badly damaged apartment.

CALL TO WORSHIP

In this season of Christmas celebrating the incarnation of love we come together in this community made sacred by our presence in the spirit of the incarnate one.

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

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

Today we light the Christ Candle representing God's love for me, for us, and for the world that our hunger for hope, peace, joy and love, can be quenched as we disciples of Jesus provide hope, peace, joy and love to both stranger and friend. When disaster strikes, we come with food.

(Light the candle)

The candle represents a future filled with hope, peace, joy and love

We are hungry for the food of God.

Partner Story:

In Lebanon, Elias and his young teams of refugees are cleaning up homes and comforting people struggling to recover months after the explosion at Beirut's port. Down on the ground local ACT Alliance members are organising cash vouchers and food and hygiene packs to distribute to families they know have none. Others are delivering hot meals to traumatised people like Karma and her son. They have no windows, electricity or food. It is care made possible by our work together. Christmas is the day we bring gifts for each other and those who are in need. We pray for all people recovering from disaster. We will share what we can so no one is hungry.

You may like to add some Christmas Appeal envelopes to your Advent wreath or special treats to share at the end of service.

LECTIONARY THOUGHTS

The day has come when we celebrate the incarnation. Something new has begun. We have been celebrating this new thing for 2000 years. As disciples of Jesus, we celebrate this new day every day of our lives. The promise of a new day and a new start is symbolised with every new born baby and throughout time.

Isaiah 52:7-10

Christmas morning is for celebration not only for Zion but for all who are broken and whose lives are in ruin. This passage is a message of peace, of hope, of joy and of love, for in the words of Isaiah, “our God reigns”.

Psalms 98

A song of celebration to God because of the wondrous things God has done.

Hebrews 1:1- 4, (5 -12)

It is said that verses 1-4 are some of the most carefully worded statements in the New Testament. This person, God’s Son is the reflection of God’s glory, unparalleled in human history. “Superior to prophets and angels”: these words frame the sermon we know as Paul’s epistle to the Hebrews.

John 1:1-14

In John’s story there are no angels, no shepherds, no magi, no King Herod, no virgin birth. The story lacks our familiar tale. John opens with the cosmic word, wisdom and light that incarnates into the world, embodied in flesh.

Partner Story: Disaster Strikes and we come with Food

When a local member of ACT Alliance Lebanon first came to her door with hot food, Karma gave thanks to God. Days after the Beirut explosion had blown out her windows and pushed her from her chair into the wall, she was desperate. The pair are now dependent on the help of others. Thanks to her neighbours, plastic sheeting covers the window



ACT Alliance Lebanon staff and volunteers organise food and hygiene packs for families.

frames of her tiny apartment where she lives with her disabled son. Local church people deliver hot food to her three times a week and her neighbours help when they can.

Across town Palestinian and Syrian young people at the [Dbaveh Refugee Camp](#) felt the explosion and started to talk. The next day they contacted Elias Habib, the Department of Service to Palestinian (DSPR) youth leader and demanded to help. Within a short while, he got agreement and began to organise the clean-up teams. He gathered protective gear and tools for the groups. At first they joined other teams cleaning up the streets.

Director Sylvia Haddad says, “The sight was very beautiful. Many people were working to clean up the mess but the second stage that was the hard one. The youth teams began to work on the homes, some apartments that were 30 or more stories up with no electricity or lifts. They had to climb up and down the stairs. The young people were very

motivated. They were working from their hearts to help people.”

Months after the August explosion she says the young people are one of the few groups still working. They won't forget this experience that is building bridges between the refugee and Lebanese communities as well as providing practical help to some of the poorest people.

Rebuilding is not all that DSPR Lebanon is doing. Along with other ACT Alliance members, they are distributing food or cash vouchers. The explosions added to Lebanon's economic and political troubles. In its aftermath, Covid-19 is spreading quickly. Many families are in desperate need of food and hygiene items. DSPR Lebanon is distributing food and vouchers to keep them going. The collapse in the Lebanese currency is making this harder.

“We can help people because we are on the ground and we know people and their condition,” Sylvia adds. She says other non-governmental organisations are asking them to distribute funds because of these links. It is best to give families cash.

“Cash is always best. We do not want to bomb people with lentils and rice, and then spaghetti. The only problem is getting enough cash to meet all the needs,” she concludes.

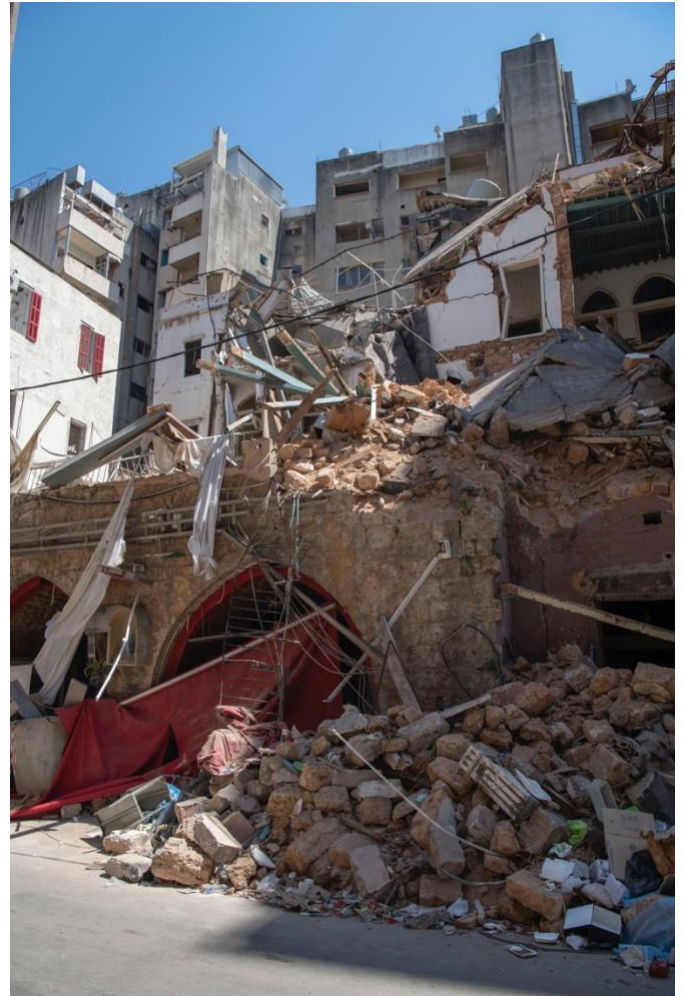
Christmas comes not once a year, but whenever and wherever people share what they can with those in need.

INTERCESSION

We give thanks for 75 years of Christian World Service.

Lebanon faces many challenges especially as it recovers

from disasters. Christmas is a day for gift giving in a country who imports most of its food when there is not enough to go round. Through



Rocked by disaster, the people of Beirut are struggling with new trauma and facing an uncertain future. Life will not be the same for many as the country faces the economic and political crisis.

the efforts of CWS we can contribute to a new day,

new hope, peace, joy, and love so that there can be

enough.

The world hungers for the incarnate one.

We hunger for the incarnate one.

BLESSING

In this season of celebration
we incarnate the Commonwealth of God.
The world hungers for the incarnate one.
We hunger for the incarnate one.
Amen.

Activity

Your church will have its own rituals but it is always good to add something new. You might like to share special food or show the Christmas Appeal video available [here](#).

For Discussion

Invite people to share a special memory of Christmas or a story of when they saw love in action.

On this Christmas Day, what can be done to make sure people who are hungry have food?

How will we take the promise of Christmas and the dream of peace on earth into the year ahead.

We share hope with those who are hungry this Christmas.



DSPR Lebanon has added a popular beekeeping course to its programme, helping graduates earn new income.

When I was *hungry*



**Christian
World Service**

donate now

christmasappeal.org.nz

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