THERE'S HISTORY IN THIS BOWL

Christmas Bowl 2025
Church Toolkit



ACT FOR PEACE
CONFRONTING INJUSTICE TOGETHER
THROUGH THE actalliance

Christmas Bowl

The Christmas Bowl is the Christmas appeal of Act for Peace, the international humanitarian agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia | ABN 86 619 970 188 | christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au

Genaye Eshetu/Act for Peace

Christmas Bowl

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Note
**names throughout this booklet have been changed for safety reasons.*

ARSEMA'S STORY

After fleeing her home in Eritrea, Arsema* faced hardship and loneliness as a refugee living in Ethiopia. Through the support of the Christmas Bowl, she was able to join the Tesfa program run by our local partner, giving her the skills and support she needed to provide for her daughter and rebuild her life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Act for Peace acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging and extend that respect to all other Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.



USING THIS BOOKLET AND YOUR ONLINE RESOURCES

The Christmas Bowl has a long and remarkable history of bringing hope and peace to communities affected by conflict and disaster.

Wes Selwood/Act for Peace

THIS CHRISTMAS, YOUR CONGREGATION CAN:

Learn about the challenges faced by communities around the world.

Pray for people whose lives have been uprooted by conflict and disaster.

Act generously to make a real and tangible difference.

By participating, your church is connected to a global movement for peace that transcends denominational and geographical boundaries and continues the Christmas Bowl's 76-year legacy of generosity.

Every contribution — whether it is reflection, prayer, or practical support — reminds us that our collective compassion can change lives.

What you bring truly matters.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET AND YOUR ONLINE RESOURCES

The Christmas Bowl begins on Sunday, 23 November 2025, coinciding with Reign of Christ Sunday — a significant date in the liturgical calendar for several Christian traditions — and continues until Christmas Day. Designed for ecumenical use, the resources in this toolkit are flexible, so you can adapt them to resonate with your faith community.

These resources have been thoughtfully developed for ministers and church leaders to use at a time of year when schedules are often very full and ministry teams can be stretched.

They include: liturgies, links to personal stories from individuals and communities supported by the Christmas Bowl and practical tips. Additional resources, including videos, PowerPoint presentations, speaker notes, children's activities, and more, can be downloaded from:

christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au/resources

All of these are crafted to enable you to bring the Christmas Bowl to life in your community, encouraging your church members to direct their minds, hearts and prayers towards others, as they prepare for their Christmas celebrations.

> **"Your church is connected to a global movement for peace that transcends denominational and geographical boundaries..."**

LEARN

Throughout the Advent season, Act for Peace will provide churches with emailed prayer points for communities around the world, as communicated by our teams on the ground.

These updates will equip you and your team to guide your congregation to connect more personally with the plight of people they will likely never meet and reflect on their situation.

By coming together to learn and reflect on the plight of others, your church continues a long tradition of reflective solidarity — *and every reflection matters.*

PRAY

These emailed prayer points will equip you and your teams to lead your church in prayer throughout Advent — a powerful means to stand in solidarity with those affected by conflict and disaster. The prayers, along with the liturgies included in this toolkit, will help focus hearts and minds on the hope, peace, joy, and love that the Christmas Bowl embodies, as the Church faithfully responds with Christ-like love to the needs of others.

By coming together in prayer, your church continues a long tradition of prayerful solidarity — *and every prayer matters.*



Wes Selwood/Act for Peace

ACT

You and your team are welcome to collect donations for the Christmas Bowl at any time during Advent — it doesn't need to be only on Christmas Day.

Every donation your congregation gives helps to support people and communities facing conflict, displacement, and disaster. Your generosity provides life-saving support such as clean water, food, shelter, education, and healthcare. Each act of giving transforms lives, restores dignity, and brings hope where it is needed most.

This toolkit includes practical guidance to help your church act together: on page 23 you'll find options for collecting donations, and on page 24, clear instructions for forwarding them to Act for Peace.

You'll also have access to a unique online donation page for your church, making it easy to give, track your collective impact, and receive instant email receipts. QR codes on posters and downloadable resources make participation safe, simple, and visible.

By coming together to give, your church continues a long tradition of generous solidarity — *and every gift matters.*

THERE'S HISTORY IN THIS BOWL

For more than seven decades, Australian Christians from across the breadth of the Church have gathered around the Christmas Bowl, turning generosity into a living tradition of hope.

Now in its 76th year, the Christmas Bowl is, for many churches, as much a part of Christmas as singing Christmas carols or their Christmas Eve service. What began in 1949 with Rev. Frank Byatt placing a simple empty bowl on his family table has become one of the country's longest-running and most unifying expressions of Christian witness.

Since its beginning, the Christmas Bowl has been about love in action. As Byatt himself reminded the church in 1958: *"The evangel is complete only when the action of the Gospel matches the message of the Gospel."*

That conviction has shaped generations of giving. Year after year, church congregations of all shapes and sizes have contributed their gifts to the Bowl — forging a tradition of faithful service that has helped countless families uprooted by conflict and disaster.

That same legacy continues today.

Around the world, more families than ever are being forced from their homes by conflict and climate disasters. From Gaza to the Pacific, from Ethiopia to Pakistan, people are searching for safety and belonging. Through the Christmas Bowl, your church community can stand alongside them, offering practical support and a powerful reminder that they are not forgotten.

Every gift matters. What you donate, whether large or small, helps meet urgent needs and continues this legacy of compassion. Together, through the Christmas Bowl, we can shine Christ's light into some of the darkest places in our world.

As you gather as a church community this Christmas season, you are invited to add your gift to the Bowl.

To continue the legacy. To Act for Peace.



Pictured: Christmas Bowl founder Rev. Frank Byatt and his family.

THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

By the Rev (Deacon) Sandy Boyce
Executive Officer of the Victorian Council of Churches

"There is history in that bowl — each gift of compassion today becomes part of the story of hope for generations to come."

Reflecting on history, I am reminded of two sayings: Kierkegaard's *"Life can only be understood backward; but it must be lived looking forward"* and the Māori wisdom of *"walking backwards into the future with our eyes on the past."* Both remind us that the past is not gone — it shapes how we live today and how we step into the future.

This is important when the present feels overwhelming. We see fragmentation and intersecting crises: the climate emergency, wars and displacement, widening inequality, the normalisation of violence, and the degradation of the environment. The suffering of the vulnerable can too easily fade into background noise.

So, we step back in time… to one man and his family around a Christmas table. Rev. Frank Byatt, grateful for food, family, security and safety, also knew that, in many parts of the world, these everyday blessings were torn away by war and disaster. In the aftermath of World War II, millions were displaced and refugees faced starvation. Frank placed an empty bowl on his table as a "Bowl of Remembrance" and invited his congregation to make a generous gift to share their good fortune with hungry and vulnerable people overseas. From that simple, prayerful act came the first formal Christmas Bowl appeal in 1949.

There *is* history in that bowl.

Over decades, it has become an enduring ecumenical tradition, raising significant funds for humanitarian aid, transforming lives, and reminding us that generosity can ripple through generations.

Frank Byatt's vision should not be consigned to history. His example shows how one person's faithful imagination can mobilise others, and how momentum grows when we act together. We do well to also remember the prophets — Jeremiah, Isaiah, Micah, Amos — who cried out for justice. Isaiah spoke with piercing clarity: *"If you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness"* (Isaiah 58).

True worship is not empty ritual. To love God is to love our neighbour. To honour God is to act with compassion. Jesus revealed to us the heart of God, who delights when the hungry are fed, the naked clothed, the thirsty given drink, and the weary given hope.

The Christmas Bowl invites us to step into this living history. As we look back with gratitude, we also look forward with hope, trusting that our gifts today will help shape a more compassionate future for generations to come.

CLOSING PRAYER

God of compassion and hope,
as we gather at our tables this Christmas,
keep before us the vision of your prophets
and the example of Christ, that our generosity may
bring light in dark places, bread to the hungry, and
hope to the weary.

Bless the gifts we offer through the Christmas Bowl, that they may become signs of your love at work in the world.

Amen.



> **“The Christmas Bowl has become an enduring ecumenical tradition, raising significant funds for humanitarian aid, transforming lives, and reminding us that generosity can ripple through generations.”**
>
> **Rev (Deacon) Sandy Boyce**

Bangladesh: Richard Wainwright/Act for Peace

YOUR GIFT TO THE WORLD – TRANSFORMING LIVES THROUGH FAITH AND ACTION

For over 75 years, Australians have offered more than donations through the Christmas Bowl, with each act of giving helping to sow peace across the globe.

Today, thanks to the generosity of church communities like yours, Act for Peace is partnering with local agencies to bring tangible change to people displaced by conflict and disaster.

By contributing to the Christmas Bowl, your congregation helps to provide vital emergency relief, foster education, and promote peace in regions where hope is scarce. The faith of your church community becomes tangible change that offers displaced families not just aid, but a renewed sense of dignity and belonging.

The work featured throughout this toolkit highlights just some of the incredible work that your congregation is supporting around the world.



Jordan: The Forsa youth program empowers refugees to rebuild their lives through vocational training, business development, and financial literacy. Families who fled Syria and Palestine are finding hope and self-reliance through this locally led and transformative initiative.



Pakistan: Through education programs, Act for Peace is empowering girls and women to break the cycle of poverty. By providing access to education and vocational training, communities are building a brighter future for the next generation.



Gaza: Despite the ongoing humanitarian crisis, local organisations supported by Act for Peace provide vital assistance to displaced families. Through mobile clinics, emergency cash support, and hygiene kits, your support is helping restore dignity and hope to those affected by conflict.



Indonesia: In the wake of natural disasters, Act for Peace supports communities to build resilience through disaster preparedness and response programs. Local organisations are leading efforts to ensure communities are equipped to face future challenges.



Zimbabwe: In partnership with the Zimbabwe Council of Churches and Christian Care, Act for Peace is supporting communities to become more resilient to the impacts of climate change. Through programs like climate-resilient farming, wetland regeneration, and community gardens, families are rebuilding their lives and securing their futures.



Ethiopia: The Tesfa program offers urban refugees a pathway out of poverty. By providing training, mentoring, and financial support, refugees are gaining the skills and confidence to create sustainable livelihoods for their families.

WEEK 1 – REIGN OF CHRIST

Date: Sunday, 23 Nov 2025 (Year C)
Focus Region: Zimbabwe
Theme: The enduring legacy of the Christmas Bowl in Zimbabwe, sustaining displaced and host communities with food, livelihoods and resilience.

Lectionary Readings:
First reading: Jeremiah 23:1-6 and Luke 1:68-79
Psalm: Psalm 46
Second reading: Colossians 1:11-20
Gospel: Luke 23:33-43



Tobin Jones/Act for Peace

THE CHRISTMAS BOWL IN ZIMBABWE

In drought-affected Zimbabwe, Lucia is raising nine children while farming in a region where rivers have dried up. Through the Christmas Bowl and our partner Christian Care, she has learned new techniques to grow food, rear chickens, and provide for her family.

Climate change is forcing farmers to adapt as droughts, floods and storms make survival harder.

With support from the Christmas Bowl, Christian Care is training families in conservation farming, livestock rearing, and wetland rehabilitation to build resilience and secure food and income. For Lucia, this means food on the table, eggs to sell, and the confidence her children can stay in school.

Learn more about Lucia and farming in Zimbabwe at christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au/resources

CALL TO WORSHIP

Come, people of God,
out of the shadows of fear and weariness,
into the light of Christ's reign.
In him we see the fullness of God,
the One who holds all creation together.

When the world feels overcome by darkness,
Christ is still supreme,
reconciling all things through the power of his cross.

Let us lift our voices in praise,
for we belong not to the realm of night
but to the kingdom of Christ, our Lord.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

God of compassion and justice,
we bring before you the people of Zimbabwe,
facing the hardships of drought, flood, and changing climate.
Grant wisdom and courage to communities
as they turn to climate-smart farming,
seek access to clean water, and strive for secure livelihoods.
May their work bring nourishment and hope.
Response: *Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

We give thanks for the enduring connection between churches in Australia and communities in Zimbabwe.
Bless the partnerships that share knowledge, resources, and encouragement.
May these relationships continue to sustain both displaced families
and host communities with resilience and dignity.
Response: *Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

We remember all who are hungry, weary, or without safe shelter.
Strengthen them with your Spirit,
that they may find courage in adversity,
and joy in the fellowship of neighbourly care.
Response: *Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Guide your Church here and throughout the world
to stand alongside our sisters and brothers
in Zimbabwe,
as signs of your kingdom of justice and peace.
Response: *Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.*

Through Jesus Christ our Lord who taught us to pray… *(may be followed by the Lord's Prayer)*

Amen.

DEDICATION OF THE OFFERING

Christ, image of the invisible God,
You lived among us,
showing us in person what the reign of God looks like.

A reign of justice, love, mercy and compassion.
As we place our gifts in this bowl,
we remember the history of love and compassion it carries.

May these gifts bring hope and life.

We pray for the people of Zimbabwe, facing hunger, drought, and disaster.

Bless projects that bring life-giving water, food, and resilience.

May this offering serve your reign of justice and peace.

Until all creation flourishes in your love.

Amen.

SENDING OUT

Go now in the name of Christ -
whose reign is justice, peace, and love.
As we go, we remember the history in the bowl -
decades of compassion shaping lives with hope.
We go now, and place ourselves
at the service of the Gospel
to join in with God's work
of transformation and restoration
in the world.
And may the blessing of God,
the compassion of Christ,
and the presence of the Holy Spirit,
rest upon you and remain with you,
and bring peace to your soul,
today and always.

Amen.



REV (DEACON) SANDY BOYCE

Weeks 1 and 2

Rev (Deacon) Sandy Boyce is an ordained Uniting Church Minister, currently working with the Victorian Council of Churches. She was President of DIAKONIA World Federation 2013-2025, an international network of ecumenical diaconal associations. In this role, and in various other work roles, she has had an opportunity to travel to many countries in Africa, Asia, India, the Pacific, Europe and the Americas, and has seen firsthand the work of the churches and agencies addressing social concerns.

WEEK 2 – FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Date: Sunday, 30 Nov 2025 (Year A)
Focus Region: Ethiopia
Theme: Hope in exile, celebrating Christ's presence among displaced families in Ethiopia, supported through emergency and rebuilding lives.

Lectionary Readings:
First reading: Isaiah 2:1-5
Psalm: Psalm 122
Second reading: Romans 13:11-14
Gospel: Matthew 24:36-44


Genaye Eshetu/Act for Peace

THE CHRISTMAS BOWL IN ETHIOPIA

After fleeing Eritrea, Arsema* (pictured) struggled to survive as a refugee in Ethiopia. Through the Christmas Bowl and our partner the Ethiopian Orthodox Church-Development and Interchurch Commission (EOC-DICAC), she joined the Tesfa program, receiving support and training so she can build a better life for her daughter.

Life as an urban refugee can be overwhelming, with few opportunities to earn an income.

Through the Tesfa program refugees like Arsema receive mentoring, financial support, and vocational training to create sustainable livelihoods. Arsema is now studying make-up artistry and preparing to provide for her daughter with new skills and hope for the future.

Learn more about Arsema and the Tesfa program at christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au/resources

RESPONSIVE CALL TO WORSHIP

We come, ready to find ourselves in the company of God.
We come, seeking God's ways of justice and peace.

The night is far gone, the day is near.
We wake from our sleep, to walk in God's light.

Nations shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks.
We long for the day when war shall be no more.

Come, people of God, let us worship the One who calls us.
We come to learn God's ways, to walk in Christ's light, and to live in peace.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Lord Jesus, our hope and our help, we bring to you prayers for the world.
We lift our hearts to the Lord of peace.

God of faithfulness and truth, we pray for those whose names we do not know, whose stories rarely make the news, and whose afflictions fade quickly from our sight.
All are known to you and loved by you.

We pray for Ethiopia, where too many families are displaced, where poverty runs deep, and despair seems never-ending.
Christ, be present among the weary and exiled.

We give thanks for those who offer compassionate care, food, and shelter in times of need.
May your mercy shine in every act of care.

Strengthen the work of rebuilding, that all may find sustainable incomes and restored dignity.
May despair be turned into joy.

We pray for children longing for safety, for parents striving to provide, for communities dreaming of a place to call home.
Let your kingdom come, O God of peace.

In this Advent season of watching and waiting, we pray for those who wait with anxiety.

Teach us to walk in your light, to share what we have, to seek justice with compassion.

For Christ is our hope, now and always.

Amen.

DEDICATION OF THE OFFERING

God of compassion and new life,
we bring these gifts with grateful hearts.

In a world where too many families
are displaced,
and poverty steals dignity and hope,
we pray that you would bless what we offer today.

As we place our gifts in this bowl,
we remember the history of love and compassion it carries.

Transform our giving into seeds of justice,
into pathways of sustainable life,
into signs of your love made visible.

May this offering strengthen our
church community
and reach beyond us,
bringing hope to neighbours near and far.

In the name of Jesus Christ,
our light and our salvation.

Amen.

SENDING OUT

People of God, take heart.
The night is far gone, the day is near.

Christ calls us to wake up, to cast off despair and put on the armour of light.

In a world of poverty, greed, and fear,
you are sent to live differently -
to walk in hope, to resist injustice,
to share generously, and to shine with compassion.

Go now in peace,
for the light of Christ is breaking in,
and God is not finished with the world.

Amen.


Genaye Eshetu/Act for Peace

WEEK 3 – SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Date: Sunday, 7 Dec 2025 (Year A)
Focus Region: Jordan
Theme: Hope and peace in exile: supporting Syrian and Palestinian refugees building new lives through empowerment and community resilience.

Lectionary Readings:
First Reading: Isaiah 11:1–10
Psalm: Psalm 72:1–7, 18–19
Second Reading: Romans 15:4–13
Gospel: Matthew 3:1–12

THE CHRISTMAS BOWL IN JORDAN

In Jordan, Hassan* (pictured) was unsure of his future after displacement left him without opportunities. Through the Christmas Bowl, he joined the Forsa Youth Project and trained in hotel management, giving him skills, confidence, and employment.

The Forsa Youth Project, run by the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees, empowers Syrian and Palestinian refugees to rebuild their lives through vocational training, business development, and financial literacy. Families who fled their homes are finding hope and self-reliance through this locally led initiative. Hassan now works in catering and customer service, a transformation he describes as life-changing.

Learn more about Hassan and the Forsa Youth Project at christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au/resources



DSPR Jordan/Act for Peace

CALL TO WORSHIP

Come, people of hope, to the God who gathers
the scattered and heals the broken.

Here we stand in Advent waiting, longing for peace
and justice to break forth.

We hear Isaiah's promise: a shoot from the stump, a
reign of wisdom and equity.

We look to Christ, whose welcome embraces the
stranger, whose Kingdom restores the exiled

Come, Spirit of hope, breathe new life into
weary hearts.

Come, Prince of Peace, we wait for You.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

God of refuge and strength,
we pray for those who live in exile, longing for
a home they may never see again.
We lift before You the people of Syria and
Palestine who have found shelter in Jordan.

For families who carry stories of loss and hope,
for children who grow up between worlds,
for youth searching for dignity, work,
and belonging —
Lord, in Your mercy, be their strength.

We give thanks for the work of the Department of
Service to Palestinian Refugees,
and for the Forsa youth program:
empowering young people to learn, to create,
to rebuild their lives with dignity.
Bless their hands and minds as they study,
work, and dream of new futures.

We pray for leaders and nations:
that they may honour human dignity,
open doors to the displaced,
and seek peace beyond fear and division.

We pray for Your church in Jordan and across
the Middle East:
that it may embody the hospitality of Christ,
standing with refugees,
proclaiming that hope cannot be extinguished.

God of the shoot that grows from the stump,
make us signs of Your promise —
that despair may give way to resilience,
and exile to belonging.

Through Christ, our hope and peace.

Amen.

DEDICATION OF THE OFFERING

God of hope,
we dedicate these gifts to the
work of renewal and peace.

As Christ comes to dwell among us,
may these offerings bring education, livelihoods,
and community to refugees in Jordan.

Through the Christmas Bowl,
may young people discover opportunity,
families find resilience,
and communities taste the promise of justice
and belonging.

Bless this bowl with the history of love it carries:
of prayers shared, of hope sustained,
of peace sown in hard soil.

Take our small gifts and multiply them,
that they may become signs of Your Kingdom.

Through Jesus Christ, our hope, we pray.

Amen.

SENDING OUT

Go now in the light of Advent hope:
the branch that blossoms from the stump,
the peace that gathers the nations,
the joy that comes to the exiled.

Carry with you the stories of refugees in Jordan,
their resilience and courage,
their longing for dignity and peace.

Go to live as people of welcome,
to build community,
to proclaim Christ's nearness.

And may the God of hope fill you with
joy and peace in believing,
so that you may abound in hope by the
power of the Spirit. Amen.



REV. DR GRAHAM JOSEPH HILL
Weeks 3 and 4

Reverend Dr Graham Joseph Hill is an Associate Professor at Charles Sturt University, a mission catalyst with the Uniting Church, and the author of more than twenty books. In 2024, Graham was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) for his service to theological education.

WEEK 4 – THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Date: Sunday, 14 Dec 2025 (Year A)
Focus Region: Indonesia
Theme: Joy through resilience: preventing displacement by building climate adaptation in vulnerable communities.

Lectionary Readings:
First Reading: Isaiah 35:1–10
Psalm: Psalm 146:5–10 (or Luke 1:46b–55)
Second Reading: James 5:7–10
Gospel: Matthew 11:2–11


Agung Pranoto/Act for Peace

THE CHRISTMAS BOWL IN INDONESIA

In Central Sulawesi, Indonesia, Eko* (pictured) and his family have lived through multiple floods that devastated their rice fields and community. Through the Christmas Bowl, they've joined the DREAM program, learning farming techniques that improve crop quality and help them adapt to climate change.

The DREAM program, led by our partner Church World Service (CWS), equips farming families like Eko's to withstand floods and natural disasters. Eko has gained knowledge and tools that strengthen crops, reduce expenses, and improve family resilience. Across Indonesia, CWS is helping communities prepare for disasters and adapt to a changing climate.

Learn more about Eko and our partner CWS at christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au/resources

CALL TO WORSHIP

The desert shall rejoice and blossom like the crocus,
streams will flow in dry land,
and the people will sing for joy.

We gather to worship the God who turns
mourning into dancing,
who gives strength to the weary and
hope to the poor.

In Christ, joy rises even in the midst of hardship,
and the Spirit renews the face of the earth.

Come with songs, come with prayers,
come with joy.

For God is here,
and we will rejoice together.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

God of life and renewal,
we lift before You the people of Indonesia,
who live with the constant threat of floods,
storms, and rising seas.

We give thanks for their resilience, their courage,
and their determination to adapt.

Bless those who farm the land, who build homes,
who teach their children to hope.

We pray for communities working together
through climate adaptation programs.

Strengthen their hands as they plant, rebuild, and
prepare for tomorrow.

Let their joy be rooted not in fleeting ease, but in
the enduring promise of Your care.

We pray for those already displaced by disaster.
Give them safety, dignity, and support to
rebuild their lives.

We pray for governments and leaders:
stir them to act with urgency and justice in
responding to the climate crisis.

We pray for the church across the world:
may we embody the joy of Advent,
not shallow or sentimental,
but the deep joy that flows when we
act in love and solidarity.

God of the blossoming desert,
make us partners in Your renewing work,
that the wilderness may rejoice and all creation sing.

Through Christ, our joy and salvation.

Amen.

DEDICATION OF THE OFFERING

God of abundance,
we bring these gifts with joy, trusting that
You will use them
to sustain life, prevent displacement,
and nurture hope.

As water renews dry ground
and seeds grow into harvest,
may these offerings bring resilience to
vulnerable communities in Indonesia.

Through the Christmas Bowl,
let our love become shelter,
our sharing become adaptation,
our generosity become joy.

Bless this bowl as a sign of faithfulness,
that Your Kingdom may be glimpsed in lives
renewed and futures restored.

Through Jesus Christ, our joy,
we dedicate these gifts.

Amen.

SENDING OUT

Go forth with joy,
for the desert shall bloom and the wilderness sing.

Carry with you the hope of Christ,
the strength of the Spirit,
and the joy that no storm can wash away.

Remember the people of Indonesia,
whose resilience points us to God's renewing work.

Go to live as people of Advent,
sowing joy, resisting despair,
and rejoicing in the God who makes all things new.

Amen.


Agung Pranoto/Act for Peace

WEEK 5 – FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Date: Sunday, 21 Dec 2025 (Year A)
Focus Region: Pakistan
Theme: Love in service, providing access to education and healthcare for underserved families, especially empowering women and girls.

Lectionary Readings:
First Reading: Isaiah 7:10–16
Psalm: Psalm 80:1–7, 17–19
Second Reading: Romans 1:1–7
Gospel: Matthew 1:18–25



Aliza Khan/Act for Peace

THE CHRISTMAS BOWL IN PAKISTAN

In drought-affected Umerkot, Pakistan, girls like Anaya* (pictured centre, with orange-trimmed scarf) once had little chance to study. With support from the Christmas Bowl, she is now in school and dreams of becoming a doctor, inspiring other girls in her village to learn. In partnership with Community World Service Asia (CWSA), the Christmas Bowl is helping communities raise awareness and increase access to education — especially for girls. Displacement and poverty have left many families without schooling or healthcare, but mothers like Sunia are championing change. "When my daughter began attending school, other girls started their education too," she says.

Learn more about Anaya and education in Pakistan at christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au/resources

CALL TO WORSHIP

There is history in this Advent day:
A promise spoken through the Prophets.
Awaiting love to draw near.
Angels in dreams whispering hope.

And there is history in this bowl:
A history of bread broken for the refugees
and the marginalised,
hands opened in solidarity and compassion,
abundant love shared across borders to places like
Umerkot in Pakistan.

Then there is history in our waiting,
for Immanuel-God is with us,
yesterday, today and tomorrow
grounded in every act of love that transforms.

Come and be part of the story in making.
We come to worship the One who is Love
made flesh.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

(This prayer is interactive and needs some strips of paper and pen distributed to the people as they come in. When it is time for a prayer of intercession, play gentle music and invite people to write/draw a prayer as they think of the places and people that embodies God's love. After a few minutes, invite people to place their prayers in the Christmas bowl. And you can offer the short prayer below).

God of history and hope,
Your love has carried us through generations.
Today we place our prayers in this bowl,
joining them to your long history of compassion and liberation.

Hold our prayers in love,
and hold the women and girls seeking education and dignity in Pakistan close to your heart.

May our hearts, beat with your love for the world in solidarity.

As we lift these prayers to you,
(If you are able, lift up the Christmas bowl)
make us part of your history in siding with the poor and the marginalised. Tending to the sick and the vulnerable.

May the angels whisper 'do not fear' in places of brokenness and suffering. And may we rise with love in places of division and hatred.

Amen.

DEDICATION OF THE OFFERING

There is history in this bowl, O God.

Generations have poured their love here, each coin, each gift, a story of solidarity.

Bless what we offer today and may they become books in classrooms, medicines in clinics, bread on tables, justice in weary hearts.

Bless our hands and hearts that we may be written into your story of love this Advent Day and always.

Amen.

SENDING OUT

There is history in this Advent day.
There is history in this bowl.

We go now,
to partake in this story still unfolding.
Become love in action and you will witness Immanuel has come near.

And may the promise of the prophets and the whispers of angels, guide you towards God birthing love into the world.

Amen.



REV. HEE WON CHANG
Weeks 5 and 6

Rev. Hee Won Chang resides on the lands of Bidjigal and Gadigal peoples and is a Minister of the Word in the Uniting Church in Australia, currently serving at Hope Uniting Church in Maroubra. A first-generation Korean migrant, she brings an intercultural lens to ministry, weaving together biblical interpretation, justice and lived experience of identity and belonging.



Aliza Khan/Act for Peace

WEEK 6 – CHRISTMAS DAY

Date: Thursday, 25 Dec 2025 (Year A)
Focus Region: Gaza
Theme: Peace amid conflict, providing urgent aid and care to displaced families in Gaza, affirming they are not forgotten.

Lectionary Readings:
First Reading: Isaiah 62:6-12
Psalm: Psalm 97
Second Reading: Titus 3:4-7
Gospel: Luke 2:(1-7), 8-20


Majdi Fathi/Christian Aid

THE CHRISTMAS BOWL IN GAZA

In Gaza, Abed's* children (pictured) collect water from tanks, sometimes forced to drink it when no clean supply is available. After losing his son and both of his homes, Abed and 70 relatives now shelter in a damaged house at risk of collapse.

Conflict has destroyed homes and vital infrastructure, leaving families without water, sanitation or safety. Abed's family are among many struggling to survive amid devastation and loss. Through the Christmas Bowl, local partners are providing urgent aid — including clean water, hygiene kits and emergency cash support — to help families endure this crisis and know they are not forgotten.

Learn more about Abed's story and the Christmas Bowl in Gaza at christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au/resources

CALL TO WORSHIP

This morning,
in a world still restless with war and division,
fragility and beauty,
mischievous joy and hope.

In Gaza and in *(name your location)*,
birth could not be delayed.

Nothing could stop this child from entering our world,
a cry no empire could silence.

A song of peace sung at birth:
Glory to God in the highest, and peace on earth!

Born into a world that is both loved and broken.
Christ is born. Merry Christmas!

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION (LAMENT AND HOPE)

Christmas child,
we hold a world that is both loved and broken.

For Gaza,
whose families wake to rubble and destruction,
where children's lullabies are cut short,
our heart breaks.

for the families who have lost loved ones as hostages,
for Islands losing shorelines
for lives uprooted by flood, fire and rising costs,
our heart breaks.

Yet in the cracks of sorrow,
Compassion slips in and love takes hold.
You were born under an empire's shadow,
yet surrounded by creation, shepherds,
and angels,
wrapped in love, not fear.

So be born in us this day.
Turn lament into solidarity,
prayer into action,
love into witness.

Christmas child,
born into a world both loved and broken.
Teach us to sing your song of peace and justice.
Plant in us your seed of hope and joy.

Humbly we pray,

Amen.

DEDICATION OF THE OFFERING

At your birth, you were not alone but surrounded with love and amazement. There was no guest room left yet strangers welcomed you in their house, animals gave their manger, and the shepherds hurried with joy.

So we lift up this Christmas Bowl,
a history of love and amazement,
solidarity and care,
hope and witness, reaching places like Gaza.

Transform our gifts into practical help. Let them declare that no one is forgotten in Gaza. And help us to strengthen our voice for a just peace in the Holy Lands.

Amen.

SENDING OUT

Go as people who have seen light
break into darkness,
who have heard a child's cry no
empire could silence.

Let your prayers become action,
your gifts through the Christmas Bowl a sign of peace and commitment that we will not look away from Gaza and all who suffer.

And may God whose love spills over,
Christ born into a loved and broken world,
and the Spirit who moves through
every act of compassion,
bless you this Christmas Day and always.

Christ is born.
Peace on earth.
Merry Christmas.


Majdi Fathi/Christian Aid



Joel Pratley/Act for Peace

PRISCILLA'S STORY

In Zimbabwe, Priscilla once struggled to feed her children. Through the support of the Christmas Bowl and our local partner Christian Care, she joined the Conservation Farming program. Today, her family has enough to eat, her children are in school, and she helps other women in her community to thrive.

HOW TO COLLECT DONATIONS

Giving envelopes

Giving envelopes are one of the most familiar and effective ways for people to give to the Christmas Bowl. They make it easy for your congregation to give, ensure each gift is receipted, and reduce admin for your church.

Here are some simple ways to use them:

- Hand them out as people arrive.
- Place them on seats before worship begins.
- Display them in a visible spot throughout Advent.

Members of your congregation can post their envelopes directly back to us, or you can collect them and send them all together as a church.

Open plate giving

Many churches choose to dedicate one or more Advent services for a Christmas Bowl offering. This is a beautiful way to come together as a community, adding each gift — large or small — into the same Bowl of hope.

If someone would like a tax-deductible receipt for their cash gift, they can fill in the form included with this toolkit or download one at: **christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au/resources.**

Give Online

Online giving is quick, safe, and easy. Every church has its own unique donation page, so your members can see the impact of their collective gifts. Each donor receives an instant email receipt.

We've also included a unique QR code on your posters that links directly to your donation page. You can share or print it anywhere you'd like to make giving even easier.

HOW TO RETURN YOUR DONATIONS

SORTING YOUR GIFTS

When you've collected your congregation's gifts, here's how to return them:

- Giving envelopes with cheques or credit card details: please send these back intact so we can provide receipts.
- Giving envelopes or collections with cash: please transfer the total to us using one of the options below (cash cannot be sent by post).
- If you've filled in your Donation Details Form for anyone who needs a tax receipt, please include this with your remittance form.

TRANSFERRING ANY CASH DONATIONS

Choose the method that works best for your church:

1. **Credit card**
   via your unique church giving page.
2. **Online transfer**
   Account name: Act for Peace Ltd,
   BSB: 012 332
   Account: 2323 75215
   Please use CB and your Supporter ID as the reference and email us at info@actforpeace.org.au.
   For example: CB123456
3. **Bank deposit**
   at any ANZ branch. Bring your completed remittance form to be stamped by the teller.
   Account name: Act for Peace Ltd,
   BSB: 012 332
   Account: 2323 75215
   Please include CB and your Supporter ID as the message in the transaction.
   For example: CB123456
4. **Cheque**
   payable to Act for Peace Ltd. Send with your remittance form in the reply-paid envelope provided.

COMPLETE YOUR REMITTANCE FORM

Please fill in the remittance form included in your kit and return it with your envelopes and gifts to:

Christmas Bowl
Act for Peace
Reply Paid 93874
North Melbourne VIC 3051



Wes Selwood/Act for Peace

Please ensure all your Christmas Bowl contributions are sent by Friday, 20 February 2026, so your church's donations can quickly reach people who need them.





Wes Selwood/Act for Peace

WHO WE ARE

Act for Peace is the international humanitarian agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia.

Together with local partners around the world, we work to confront injustice and bring peace in places where people have been forced to flee from their homes by war, persecution or disaster. Our focus is on displacement, supporting families uprooted from their homes, helping them find safety, and walking alongside them as they rebuild their lives.

From standing with communities in the Pacific facing climate displacement, to supporting families in Africa with pathways out of poverty, to helping refugees find safety and dignity in the Middle East - your gifts through the Christmas Bowl are part of this global story of hope.

At the heart of it all, we believe in the strength of local communities. By partnering with local organisations, we help ensure that change is lasting, empowering, and led by the people most affected.

Your church's generosity is part of this living legacy, showing families around the world that they are not forgotten.

FAQS

Where does my gift go?

Every gift you add to the Christmas Bowl becomes part of a living legacy of compassion. Together, our gifts provide food, medical care, training and long-term support for people who have been forced from their homes by conflict or disaster.

Your generosity helps families find safety, rebuild their lives and know they are not forgotten.

How much of the money raised goes to programs?

At Act for Peace, your generosity directly fuels transformative change for communities displaced by conflict and disaster. In the 2023/24 financial year, 69.1% of all expenditure was dedicated to programs, advocacy, and community education, ensuring that the majority of every dollar you give reaches those who need it most. An additional 18.39% was invested in accountability and administration to maintain transparency and operational excellence, while 12.51% supported fundraising efforts. For every $1 spent on fundraising, Act for Peace raised $3.49, amplifying the impact of your support.

Every contribution you make helps empower communities to rebuild and thrive, demonstrating the profound difference each dollar makes.

When should we return our church's gifts?

Please send your congregation's gifts, along with the remittance form, by Friday 20 February 2026.

Can I get more resources for my church? Of course!

If you need extra envelopes, posters or other materials, just call 1800 025 101 or email info@actforpeace.org.au and we'll send them straight to you. You can also download resources anytime at christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au/resources

I'm planning a Christmas Bowl event. Should I let you know?

Yes please - we'd love to hear about it! Your story can inspire other churches, and we can also support you if needed.

Please share your stories via the Act for Peace Facebook page @actforpeace, email us at: info@actforpeace.org.au, or call 1800 025 101.

What's the easiest way for people to give online?

Each church has a unique donation page - safe, simple, and instant. Members of your congregation will receive a receipt straight away, and their gift will be counted towards your church's collective impact.

Do I need to worry about compliance?

We want your fundraising to be joyful and safe. Please make sure any events follow your State or Territory's fundraising guidelines. If you're not sure, reach out — we're happy to help you.

Australian Aid

Act for Peace gratefully acknowledge the support of the Australian Government through the Australia NGO Cooperation program (ANCP).

Christmas Bowl

STAYING CONNECTED

If you have any questions or need support, we're here to help:

Call us: 1800 025 101

Email us: info@actforpeace.org.au

Post: Act for Peace, Locked Bag Q199, Queen Victoria Building, NSW 1230

Follow us on Facebook at facebook.com/ActforPeace for stories, updates and encouragement throughout the Christmas season.

ACT FOR PEACE
CONFRONTING INJUSTICE TOGETHER THROUGH THE actalliance

National Council of Churches in Australia

The Christmas Bowl is the Christmas appeal of Act for Peace, the international humanitarian agency of the National Council of Churches in Australia | ABN 86 619 970 188 | christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au

Cover photo: Wes Selwood/Act for Peace