

Christmas Bowl Toolkit 2022



Christmas
Bowl

Share God's love with a refugee
going hungry this Christmas.

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



National Council of
Churches in Australia

ACT FOR PEACE
CONFRONTING INJUSTICE TOGETHER
THROUGH THE actalliance

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A COVID-safe Christmas Bowl

We recognise that the coronavirus pandemic is still affecting churches and that some attendees are still choosing to attend services online. We are hopeful that the resources provided will help people take part in the Christmas Bowl however they choose to gather this year.



Unique donation page & QR code

We have set up a unique donation page for your church which you can share with your congregation and we have also included a unique QR code on the poster for an easy and safe way to give online.



Online resources

You can access all the resources found in this toolkit on the Christmas Bowl website, along with information you can include in your online pew sheets and church email updates.



Connect via Facebook

The Christmas Bowl website and Facebook page will keep you up to date, help you connect with fellow churches around Australia and show how your gifts are making a difference. Thank you.



A food distribution run by our local partner in Kenya, RefugePoint, supporting refugee clients in Kawangware district of Nairobi in May 2022.



Enosh, Chalani and their daughter Eleesha stand outside their family home in Vavuniya, Sri Lanka. Enosh fled to India in 1990 where he met and married Chalani in one of the refugee camps. With the help of our local partner, they returned to Sri Lanka in 2019 and settled back on their family land.

How to use this toolkit

This toolkit is designed to be used by ministers and church leaders. It contains weekly worship resources which can be used to guide your services. The Christmas Bowl starts on November 20, The Reign of Christ and runs for seven services through to Sunday December 26. We encourage you to look through this toolkit ahead of time as it can assist you in planning each of your Christmas services.

Each week of the Christmas Bowl has resources which can help you plan your service including:

- Liturgy
- Sermon starters
- A story from the field – a brief overview of the story from overseas. The full story is provided online and can be downloaded from the Christmas Bowl website: www.actforpeace.org.au/christmasbowl.
- Each service, we would encourage you to share the weekly PowerPoint presentation with your congregation so they can see the impact of their kind support. Supporting videos are also available online.
- The liturgy, including the lighting of the Advent Candle, contains a thematic link to the Advent theme of 'hope,' 'peace,' 'love,' and 'joy.'
- On page 26 you will find instructions on how to return your gifts. This page is designed for your treasurer or designated volunteer.
- You can collect gifts for the Christmas Bowl at any time during the Advent season – it doesn't have to be only Christmas Day.

You can now use the new and improved online remittance form to return your gifts, please visit www.christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au/remittanceform

Sharing God's love through the Christmas Bowl

Thank you for joining once again with churches across Australia as we share God's love through the Christmas Bowl.

This year is already shaping up to be one of the toughest in recent memory. With the cost of living rapidly increasing for many of us, both here at home and abroad, there is much uncertainty about the future.

The impacts of the climate crisis, rising inflation and the ongoing war in Ukraine are all contributing to growing food scarcity for many communities already uprooted by conflict and disaster around the world. This global food crisis is now pushing millions to the brink of famine with families in urgent need of food, care and lifesaving support.

In these difficult times, the Christmas Bowl not only expresses our unity in Christ, it provides a powerful way for Australian Christians to share hope through practical Christian action, led by our committed local partners working in the toughest conditions around the world.

Thank you for being part of this important tradition, for backing displaced people and helping to create, together, a world where uprooted people have a safe place to belong.



Dedication of the Christmas Bowl

Blessing of the Christmas Bowls ceremony, bringing churches together in ecumenical celebration, at St James Church in Sydney.

Ben Littlejohn/Act for Peace

Today's bowl is not so different to the first Bowl of Remembrance that Rev. Frank Byatt passed around his Christmas dinner table in 1949.

Before the dedication: An empty bowl is brought from the body of the congregation and placed in a position visible to all.

Dedication

Australian Churches, through the Christmas Bowl, have acted together to bring peace and hope into the world.
Help us continue to act for peace.

As children of God we will share this year's bowl with people who are displaced, oppressed or living in poverty
May their lives be filled with hope and peace.

Gracious and ever-loving God,
Open our hearts so we may courageously act for peace in the world.
Open our hands to share what we have with those who have little.
As we dedicate this bowl
May it be filled with the fruits of hope, peace, joy and love
So all people may know your goodness and receive your grace. Amen.



Gifts through the Christmas Bowl are supporting communities uprooted by conflict and disaster around the world.

Ben Littlejohn/Act for Peace

Christmas Bowl Representative Commissioning

A number of churches choose to select a Christmas Bowl Representative for their congregation. This person is the main point of contact between Act for Peace and your church. They may also help to distribute resources and share updates on the difference you have made through the Christmas Bowl. Here is a commissioning service for Christmas Bowl Representatives.

Commissioning

To help create meaningful connections between our congregation and people in conflict and disaster around the world, this congregation has a Christmas Bowl Representative(s). Today we commission (Name) for this ministry with us.

(Name), as a Christmas Bowl Representative you:

- Will hold before us stories of lives and communities that are being transformed
- May distribute materials to keep us informed about the programs and activities we are supporting
- May offer prayer points to help our intercessions
- May encourage us to stand humbly with others
- May help us discover new ways to act for peace

(Name), are you willing to be a Christmas Bowl Representative? **I am**

Will you seek to spread the word about how churches are working together to act for peace in conflict and disaster affected regions of our world? **With God's help, I will.**

The congregation stands as the minister says

Will you accept (Name) as a Christmas Bowl Representative in this congregation? **We will.**

Will you encourage him/her in love and support him/her in this ministry, serving with him/her the one Lord Jesus Christ? **With God's help, we will.**

Prayer

(Name) has responded to your gentle call to be a Christmas Bowl Representative.

May your blessing be upon him/her as he/she brings to our attention the needs of people suffering as a result of conflict and disaster.

Also please guide him/her in ways that will open our hearts to act for peace in our world today through Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. **Amen.**



The Reign of Christ

Liturgy



Call to Worship

We come, bringing concerns and joys, gathering in faith, finding kindred spirits...

"Your kin-dom come, Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

We come, bringing ideas and accomplishments to encounter and be encountered in the kin-ship of the Holy Spirit...

"Your kin-dom come, Your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

We worship Jesus Christ and claim our place in God's kin-dom!



Prayers of Intercession:

Surround the most vulnerable in your saving arms.

Heal the sick of body and mind.

Act in mercy to bring justice and peace.

Repair the wounded creation.

Enable flourishing once again.

Create clean hearts.

Help our unbelief.

Restore courage in the face of suffering.

Invite us into your mission.

Send us with your compassion.

Then – may your kin-dom come!

Dedication of the Offering:

These physical symbols of wealth and abundance

and the donations we make directly and indirectly

are part of the bigger gift we dedicate today.

Where there is greatest scarcity and need, may these gifts make a difference.

Take our resources, our thoughts, words and actions,

weave them into your blessing of all in your Kin-dom,

that your will may be done! Amen

Sending Out:

Go to bear the story of Jesus Christ, humble ruler, protector of the vulnerable.

Go breathed into life by God's Spirit and blessed in purpose.

Go to love and serve God's world for which the Risen Christ lived and died.

Lighting of the Christ candle:



Light flickers and shines to offer us glimpses of a new society, a new understanding of heaven here on earth.

Let us honour the Light!

[when you go home today, prepare your Advent candles and remember Christ is the Light who asks us to shine too]

Bible Readings:

First Reading: Jeremiah 23:1-6

Psalm: Psalm 46 or Luke 1:68-79

Second Reading: Colossians 1:11-20

Gospel: Luke 23:33-43

God's Love in Action

Since it was founded by Rev Frank Byatt in 1949, the Christmas Bowl has brought together committed Australian Christians with dedicated local partners around the world, to give hope to people uprooted by conflict and disaster.

When Rev Byatt sat down to his Christmas dinner all those years ago, he knew millions of people were starving in war-ravaged Europe. And he was compelled to offer help.

He put a Bowl of Remembrance on his Christmas dinner table and asked his loved ones to place a gift in it to 'share your good dinner with hungry children in other lands'.

Frank couldn't have foreseen how his simple act of compassion that evening would grow into the powerful Christmas Bowl tradition now celebrated in thousands of churches across Australia. And he couldn't have known how much it would be needed in our world today.

As we break bread with our loved ones, our thoughts will be with refugees and other displaced communities, who are going hungry this Christmas.

Please join with churches across Australia again this Christmas, as together we share God's love, give hope through practical Christian action, and help create a world where uprooted people have a safe place to belong.



This is a great opportunity to share the first of the PowerPoint presentations with your congregation. It can be found on your USB stick or online at www.actforpeace.org.au/christmasbowl



Antonia* and her sister Galyna* arrived at the Ukrainian-Hungarian border in March this year. Antonia brought with her one toy and a colouring book which she already gave to another girl who had no toys with her.

Antti Yrjönen / FCA



Gifts through the Christmas Bowl have helped Ukrainian families like Eugene's who found safety at Lviv train station in the west of the country when the war began.

Antti Yrjönen / FCA

First Sunday of Advent: Hope

Liturgy



Call to Worship

[inspired by Isaiah 2 and Psalm 122]

Let us go to the house of Our God,
So that Christ may teach us the way and we may walk holy paths!

Together, we will proclaim the peace of Our God, **Praying for peace and security for all.**

For the sake of all whom we love, **we listen for hope, seeking God's peace.**

For the sake of the God we adore, **we will spread hope, by proclaiming God's goodness.**

Prayers of Intercession:

Seed in your world and in us your vision for shalom and refuge with you.

Heal those who are weary of body, mind and soul. Heal the loss of identity that accompanies homelessness and statelessness.

Anticipate heaven in the hearts of warmongers and peacemakers, restoring innocence and blessing them with the capacity to love their enemies.

Reconcile relationships between peoples and your created order.

Enter into the world with prophetic expectation, so that those who are lost to themselves and others, might find their way into your light.

May **Hostilities** cease in places of conflict and war and in homes where safety has been unknown.

May **Otherring** of the vulnerable be replaced by the yearning for respect and dignity for all.

May **Prayers** continue to stir daily in our hearts, echoing the prayers we pray we are prompted to pray today... [add local prayers]

May **Each** of the stories we share in faith today call forth fruitful blessing in our lives and in the world.

Dedication of the Offering:

Money, time, talents and other resources are unevenly distributed around the world.

We acknowledge and appreciate the abundance of blessings of this land and people.

We offer ourselves, individually and collectively to bless the world of your Creation.

Where there is greatest scarcity and need, may these gifts make a difference, especially to refugees and those who work with them.

May this sharing bring hope. Amen

Sending Out:

[inspired by Romans 13]

What time is it?

It is time to wake up!

What shall we lay aside? What shall we pick up?

We lay aside the darkness, so we can clothe ourselves in light!

So, Go – be beacons of HOPE in the world.

Go with the blessing of the One who sang light into being,

the One who was called the Light of the World,

the One who breathes fire into your soul.

Lighting of the Advent Candle (Hope):



Anew we tell the ancient tale, coming to the story circle of lights.

This first flickering is to banish darkness.

This is the candle of Hope.

Let us honour the Light! [pause]

Bible Readings:

First Reading: Isaiah 2:1-5

Psalm: Psalm 122

Second Reading: Romans 13:11-14

Gospel: Matthew 24:36-44

Sermon Starter

Do you wake up each day thinking that this might be the day when God's great clean-up of the world begins? Sometimes called the eschaton or the parousia, the apocalypse or the end-times – Christianity proclaims that there is new world coming. Instead of the pain and injustice of this life, Jesus will return and there will be a new creation. But for most Christians, there is little sense of urgency about the end of the world as we know it. We feel fine. But the early believers, including those who first received this letter to the Romans, anticipated the return of Christ very soon. They imagined a world set to rights, with God's justice for everyone. They weren't doing any long-range planning – they were just holding firm until their beloved Christ returned to establish a new kingdom. They might be surprised that we are still waiting. In a relatively free and prosperous nation, while there might be the odd crisis or deadline, most of us don't live with a sense of urgency. But for people like Eugene and her family, the need for divine justice is real and pressing. Food, medicine, warmth and security are so difficult to obtain, yet in God's future they will be freely available to all. We can't hasten the day of Jesus' return. But, if we believe in the world to come, we can start acting like it is here now. We can put aside our own petty desires and arguments, and put on the armour of light.

God's Love in Action

When the war began in Ukraine, Eugene was in hospital with her 10-month-old son who was due to receive a heart operation. But when the fighting escalated, Eugene and her family were forced to make the heartbreaking decision to flee the country.

They are just one of the millions of families who have been forced to flee their home in recent months, leading to the biggest displacement crisis in Europe since the Second World War.

Thankfully, compassionate people like you are supporting our local partner, Hungarian Interchurch Aid (HIA), who are providing vital food, shelter and medical supplies for refugees who have fled over the border to Hungary. Since arriving, Eugene has now been able to get medicine for her son and she is hopeful he can get the critical heart operation he desperately needs.

Your gifts through the Christmas will help local partners, like HIA, respond immediately to emergencies like we are seeing in Ukraine, giving families like Eugene's safety in exile – and hope for the future – when they need it most.



Share this week's video with your congregation found on your USB stick. You can also download a dedicated PowerPoint for every week of the Christmas Bowl at www.actforpeace.org.au/christmasbowl

In Syria, Farah owned goats and sheep, which they would milk to make cheese, and butter. Farah was struggling until she had the idea to make and sell cheese which she now sells to earn an income.

Second Sunday of Advent: Peace

Liturgy

Call to Worship

Prepare the way of Peace-maker:
Make the path straight.
Prepare your hearts for praise:
Let music sound loud, as we lift our voices to sing.
Prepare the world for justice:
For the Righteous One comes among us... And we will praise God!

Prayers of Intercession:

Still our spirits, so we can hear the needs of the world. Give us your heart and mind.
Help us to develop compassion for those who mourn.
Heal and make whole those who suffer from trauma and the anxiety of separation.
Answer the groanings of those who do not yet know how to pray with mercy.
Restore those who have lost their resources and refill their lives with blessing.
Enable endurance among those who wait,

May we become sources of their encouragement.
Send your Spirit upon those who face violence and conflict.
Hold fast to those who cling to your promises.
Amplify the efforts to bring peace – challenge the hearts of the greedy and bless the generous.
Love the World and Love your People, just as you call us to love You and One another.

Open us to SHALOM in new ways, with new understandings and new relationships.

Make us people of peace in your name.

Dedication of the Offering:

May swords be beaten into ploughshares and may this money become food and education and health and community.
May minefields be returned to gardens and may the first fruits become signs of shared life in the world.
And may this sharing bring peace.
Amen

Sending Out:

Go – not with passivity – be filled with an active, energizing peace.
Bear fruit worthy of repentance.
Burn with unquenchable fire.
So, Go – be PEACE-makers in the world,
Clothed in the peace of God, Creator Redeemer and Sustainer.
Amen

Lighting of the Advent Candle (Peace):

Here we tell the ancient tale, coming to the story circle of lights.
This second flame is to bring balance and the promise of harmony.

This is the candle of Peace.

Let us honour the Light! [pause]

Bible 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

Ashia, along with her husband and their three children fled to Jordan from Syria where they camped on the border for three days starving without food or water. Ashia is working hard to support her family with her pastry business.



Sermon Starter

It is now a cliché for churches to write All Welcome on signs and flyers. While we probably believe it, just writing ‘all welcome’ isn’t enough. It doesn’t necessarily mean that strangers will be included, and it certainly doesn’t mean that outsiders will be heard and valued. When Paul implores the Roman church to ‘welcome one another... just as Christ has welcomed you’ he is not talking about pot-luck dinners or a youth group games night. He is addressing a serious division in the church, between those who kept the Jewish religious codes, and those who didn’t. This conflict was exacerbated when Emperor Claudius expelled Jews from Rome in 49CE. By the time Emperor Nero allowed them back, the Gentile Christians may have had the upper hand over the Jewish Christians. Paul has asked the believers not to judge or provoke one another, and now he emphasises that God always planned to include Gentiles in the vision. The church is still struggling to include all people in God’s work. But when we hear a story like Ashia’s we see the futility of our exclusion. In a world of so much inequity, we need ‘all hands on deck’ to assist in God’s mission. Welcoming new people isn’t for our benefit, but for the benefit of the world.



The safest way to distribute your giving envelopes is to place them on chairs before the service. This makes a significant difference to the success of the Christmas Bowl and will make it easier for your congregation to access the envelopes.
If you are meeting virtually you can share the link to your church’s unique donation page so members of your congregation can make their gift securely online.

God’s Love in Action

It’s been eleven years since the civil war broke out in Syria, with thousands of families still living in neighbouring countries like Jordan. But as the cost-of-living increases, many refugee families are struggling to earn enough money to put food on the table.
At home in Syria, Ashia along with her husband and their three children had a happy life where they ran a chicken farm that produced meat and eggs. Although Ashia and her family have found peace in Jordan, they have struggled to make enough money to feed their family.
Act for Peace’s local partner, the Near East Council of Churches - Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees (DSPR), supports Syrian refugees by providing vital food rations and psychosocial care. They are also providing economic training for women like Ashia, who has now started her own pastry business, that is helping support her family.
Through the Christmas Bowl, you’ll help DSPR continue to meet the immediate needs of Syrian refugees while empowering women like Ashia to be more resilient and prepared for the challenges ahead.



Joel Pratley/Act for Peace

Third Sunday of Advent: Joy

Liturgy



Call to Worship

The blossoming of jacarandas and the hopping of quokkas tell of rejoicing.

Creation breaks forth in joy.

Desert sands ripple and vast expanses of ocean casts waves onto shore,

Creation dances in joy.

In places of flood and in places of drought, we ask that again:

Creation may flow with joy.

We are called to worship God with rejoicing: **Strengthen our weak hands and make firm our feeble knees (Isaiah 35:3)**

Let us sing and dance before our God!

Prayers of Intercession:

God, in whom we find our joy,

Set the prisoners free and loose the captives and the oppressed.

Hear the cries of those who are in the wilderness.

Add to our numbers those who would work for your purposes.

Remember the poor in spirit and those who suffer pain or loss.

Expand the *talanoa* of your gathering to include those who are marginalized and those who feel beyond our easy reach.

[*talanoa* is Tongan for gathering to talk and share]

Remind us of your love for the poor and remember us when we are distressed.

Enter the world afresh this Advent, bless those who find this time hardest.

Jesus, gather your scattered flock and let the deaf hear, the blind see and the lame dance.

Ofa atu – we love you, God – gift us with your love to share around.

Increase the joy in our community – lift the hearts of the depressed.

Care for and restore your blessed Creation – so we may rejoice with Creation again.

Expand the Church, so we may spread your good news more effectively.

Dedication of the Offering:

Preparing for Christmas, we plan for gift-giving and we may even be asked what we might like ourselves.

We are challenged when we consider the cost of food for those who are hungry.

Reminded of the work in Zimbabwe, we say Jesu tawa pano –

Jesus we are here for you – take what we offer.

And may this sharing bring joy.

Amen

Sending Out:

May rejoicing continue in days ahead.

May tears turn to laughter and mourning into dancing.

May God, Three-in-One and One-in-Three,

Hold you and Bless you in the family of Joy, now and always.

Amen

Lighting of the Advent Candle (Joy):



Here we tell the ancient tale, coming to the story circle of lights

This third light is to bring delight and rejoicing.

This is the candle of Joy.

Let us honour the Light! [pause]

Bible 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

Sermon Starter

Yet again, as we make our way through Advent, there is a sense of urgency in the scripture readings. And maybe, yet again, we find ourselves wondering if God's kingdom will ever arrive. Will the day come when there is food enough for all, and no child goes hungry? We can easily become despondent when we consider the world's injustice. But a farmer like Priscilla in Zimbabwe knows that worrying will not make the crops grow. Whether for a field of wheat, or parsley in a pot, patience is required if we want to reap and eat. Just like the prophets of old, the fledgling church needed to be resilient. Yes, it's tempting to grumble when things are not going how we would like, but James reminds the church that Christ the benevolent judge is on the doorstep, about to enter. As we get closer to Christmas, and the carols and decorations become pervasive, will we actually invite Jesus off the verandah and into our homes? Through the Christmas Bowl, and through our commitment to God's Dream, we can welcome in Jesus to our Advent, to our Christmas, and to our hearts.



See the impact that your gifts through the Christmas Bowl are making by watching the videos found on your USB stick or online at www.actforpeace.org.au/christmasbowl

God's Love in Action

Zimbabwe is suffering from critically low food reserves, as climate change brings harsher and more frequent drought. The impacts of the climate crisis, rising inflation and the ongoing war in Ukraine are making the economic situation worse by driving up food prices. Families already living in poverty and hunger are now being plunged further into crisis.

Priscilla's community has been severely affected by years of drought which decimated her crops and left her unable to feed her family. Priscilla would spend the whole day without food and have just one meal in the evening which she would share with her children.

Act for Peace's local partner, Christian Care, with support from the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP), is working closely with communities like Priscilla's to provide training in the latest climate-resilient farming techniques. The farmers are also receiving basic seed and grain packs, fertilisers, and small livestock that are helping them grow food sustainably.

Through your gift this Christmas Bowl, families like Priscilla can now be more food secure and can better withstand the climate and economic shocks facing the country.

Joel Pratley/Act for Peace



Richard Wainwright/Act for Peace



Richard Wainwright/Act for Peace

Kavitha and her son Adhi are Sri Lankan refugees currently living in a camp in south India where she was supported by our local partner, OfERR, during her pregnancy.

Fourth Sunday of Advent: Love

Liturgy



Call to Worship

Give us life and call us to yourself
And we will call upon your name.
Restore us, O God.
Let your face shine, that we might be saved.
Shine on us this day, O God,
We come to praise and worship you – God coming to be with us!

Prayers of Intercession:

God, whose name is LOVE,
Send your Spirit of compassion upon the earth.
Give double measures to people who work in the caring professions.
Increase the numbers of volunteers giving for the sake of other.
Bless those who put themselves in harms way, to protect the defenceless.
Hear the cries of your people, O God.
Hear the silent accusations of the forgotten and bring them comfort.
Hear the confessions of the guilty and shamed and restore them.

Advocate on our behalf, O Jesus – help us to know and be known in our humanity.
Give us voices to stand in solidarity with those who are mute.
Rescue our loving, when it fails or fades. Bring back our passion for life and love.
Enter the places of hate and conflict and impose your amazing love.
Encourage compassion between Sri Lankans to bring a miracle of lasting love.
Let the whole world know how to love again.
Offer us opportunities to show love and be loved.
Vanish hatred by your presence.
Emmanuel – come – we need you!

Dedication of the Offering:

The hungry have been fed with the bread of tears. (Psalm 80:5)
May our tables expand to feed people from our own plates.
May our hearts break open as we break bread,
so that sharing with others is our spiritual fulfillment.

And may this sharing bring your sacred love into your world once more. Amen

Sending Out:

With hearts full, go into Christmas week, prepared to see all of creation embodied in a tiny child.
With generosity and compassion, See beyond tinsel to the stars that guide us.
Be blessed by the God who comes, again and again:
Creator, Emmanuel, Comforter. Amen

Lighting of the Advent Candle (Love):



We continue the story of generations, Telling a story into the circle of lights.
This fourth light is for compassion and heart.
This is the candle of LOVE.
Let us honour the Light! [pause]

Bible 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

Sermon Starter

Does the opening paragraph of Paul’s letter to the Romans have anything to say to a refugee in India in urgent need of medical care? Yes, it does. But only if we believe that the good news Paul proclaims is good news for everyone. If we narrow down the good news so that it is only good news of personal salvation for true believers, then we won’t care much about Kavitha’s blood condition. But if in Paul’s greeting we can glimpse the true meaning of ‘grace and peace’, then a woman receiving injections that meant she could safely carry her baby to term becomes very important. Paul, let us remember, was a violent persecutor. He was an enforcer of rules and a lover of the law. But, transformed by Christ, he received a vision to transform the world. He wanted to recruit more and more members of a movement which would spread unconditional love and nonviolence throughout the most powerful political dominion in the world. The audacity is breathtaking. But his vision, God’s vision, still continues. With every act of kindness and every instance of compassion, the good news is infiltrating the world. You are called to be a saint of this movement of grace and peace. Will you help it spread?

God’s Love in Action

Many Sri Lankan refugees living in exile in India are finally ready to make the journey home to the country they love. But the current economic crisis and food shortages in Sri Lanka means it’s not safe for them to return, leaving many still needing support in the refugee camps.
Kavitha lives in a camp with her husband and two young children. She has suffered two miscarriages and was diagnosed with a blood condition during her pregnancy.
Thankfully our local partner, the Organisation for Eelam Refugees Rehabilitation (OfERR), with support from the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP), has been providing vital medical care for refugees like Kavitha. She received injections that meant she could safely carry her baby to term.
Through the Christmas Bowl you are helping OfERR continue to provide lifesaving medical care for refugees while they wait for Sri Lanka to be safe again. Once the crisis ends, families like Kavitha’s will finally be able to find a safe place to belong in their homeland.



Watch the Christmas Bowl video to hear how your gifts are sharing God’s love with families like Kavitha’s in India. The video can be accessed through the Christmas Bowl website or on your USB.



Christmas Day: Light of the World

Liturgy



Call to Worship

[Luke 2:10, 14, Titus 2:14]

Do not be afraid – we have news of joy to share with everyone!

Glory to God in the Highest! Peace to all people on earth!

The grace of God has appeared
Bringing salvation for all!

We come to celebrate the God of Peace and Salvation.

We come to celebrate new birth.

We come to be part of a community of joy and thanksgiving.

We come, O Christ, we come!

Prayers of Intercession:

Under Southern skies,
we bring our prayers for the world in joy and pain.

For those who work today, especially emergency services and carers,
we give thanks and ask for a peace-filled day for them.

For those who are on their own in isolation,
we ask your presence and comfort.

Knowing God, cast your eyes mercifully on those who struggle today and give them a sense of resilience and purpose.

Help them to imagine a world where their contribution is valued.

Relate to old and young, to pastoralists and wise ones, to the diversity of human existence, and show us, through your vulnerability, how to live in this sometimes harsh world.

Angelic hosts to surround the dying and encourage the fearful, sing in our spirits.

Inform our praying, so that we might be effective

in holding those in the Ukraine and surrounding nations in our hearts.

Be with those who have sought refuge in Australia and other lands.

Enable those who offer them aid.

Nations will one day bow before you, little babe.

Until that time, give us the humility to be your people among the nations, Working with hope for your peace, joy and love.

Emmanuel be praise, be with us – now and forever. Amen

Dedication of the Offering:

Receiving grace, we are thankful.

Appreciating beauty, we wonder.

In our giving, we celebrate.

May the gifts of your provision to us,

Return as signs of your love to bless others.

Sending Out:

Go in ongoing celebration of the birth of the Christ-child.

Enjoy the community brought into being by Christ today.

Share with others the story of Parent and Child,

Mother and Midwife, Publican and Tax Consultant, Traveller and Companion.

As you visit or are visited,
come alive in the blessing of the Trinity God,

present with you now and forevermore.

Lighting of the Advent Candle (Light):



We continue the story of rebirth,
Telling a story into the circle of lights.

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;

Those who lived in a land of deep darkness on them light has shined. (Isaiah 9:2)

This final light is for our own rebirth.

This is the candle for CHRIST, born once again among us.

Let us honour the Light! [pause]

Bible Readings:

First Reading: Isaiah 9:2-7

Psalm: Psalm 96

Second Reading: Titus 2:11-14

Gospel: Luke 2:1-14, (15-20)

Sermon Starter

Renounce impiety. Renounce worldly passions. Be self-controlled, upright and godly. It sounds like an end of year speech from the stuffy headmaster of a conservative school! What next, using the proper forks and learning how to curtsy? We could easily mistake this short section of the letter to Titus for a prim little lesson on respectability. Easily, that is, unless we read right to the end. What is the purpose of all this purity? Good deeds. The real purpose of a disciplined life is to mirror the self-emptying love of Jesus. With God's help, we get our own life in order so that we can serve others. This means we approach worship differently. We sing carols of praise to the Christ-child so that we are strengthened to serve the suffering children of the world. We pray to the God who sent Jesus so that we might see the world with Christ's compassionate eyes. And when we consume Christ's own precious body, we remember all those bodies still suffering in our world today. At Christmas we come close to the baby Jesus in the manger, who draws us closer to our neighbours in a world so desperately in need of a Saviour.



Merry Christmas from Act for Peace and the Christmas Bowl! If you are meeting in person, please take a few moments to encourage your congregation to fill in the giving envelope. If you are meeting online, your congregation can give using your church donation page. Thank you for joining with churches across Australia as together we share God's love through practical Christian action this Christmas.

God's Love in Action

Mugisha, her sister and two young children are just one of the millions of families living as refugees around the world. They fled to Kenya after conflict broke out in her home country of Congo six years ago.

Living as a refugee meant that simple things like having enough food or money for rent was already a daily struggle. But now the growing global food crisis has made it even harder to afford food, pushing millions of families like Mugisha's to the brink of famine.

And with the number of people uprooted from their homes at record levels, lifesaving aid is being stretched too thin, leaving many refugees at breaking-point. But by bringing together committed Australian Christians with dedicated local partners around the world, we can give hope in these dark times.

Your Christmas Bowl gifts will share God's love through practical Christian action - providing refugees with food, care and lifesaving support. And they'll also help tackle the root causes of displacement, promote more compassion for refugees, advocate for a fairer international system and ultimately help to create, together, a world where uprooted people have a safe place to belong.



First Sunday after Christmas: Thank you

Liturgy



Call to Worship

A new day, a new year, a fresh beginning...

Renew us as your people.

With Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, as our High Priest,

We come to worship God.

With the Spirit humming carols in our hears,

We hold ourselves ready to sing in your story.

Prayers of Intercession:

Relocation driven by desperation,
Enduring empty bellies and escaping evil situation,

Forgotten followers of paths without destination,

Understand and listen to the plight of the displaced and despoised.

Grant protection to the weak and wisdom to the unjustly accused.

Enrich the lives of those who wait in limbo, yearning for miracles.

Enter each day into the lives of those who are called to journey the refugee road you took so long ago.

How long must the world wait for you mercy?

Open now doors to the home of your heart. Show us the way.

Make and remake the lives of the traumatised.

Enlighten the darkness and cast out the shadows.

Dedication of the Offering:

We offer this most special day, the celebrations already begun and the conversations yet to be had... may they honour you and your way for life.

We offer you our gifts, the work that has been done and the work that is yet to do...

May they honour the times you have given each of us.

We ask you to transform our gifts of time and money into hope for the hopeless and comfort for the bereft. Amen

Sending Out:

Walk into 2023 with good intentions, backed by committed prayer and the relationships of family and friends.

May God draw you forward.

May Christ prepare the way.

May the Spirit prepare your soul.

Be blessed by God, in this day and in those to come, in this place and in the next.

Bible Readings:

First Reading: Isaiah 63:7-9

Psalms: Psalm 148

Second Reading: Hebrews 2:10-18

Gospel: Matthew 2:13-23

Sermon Starter

Even in the most functional of families, siblings crave the attention and affection of their parents. This can rapidly become competitive. Some parents play into it by picking favourites, even if they don't admit it. When we speak of God as a divine Father, we often transfer that same rivalry. How many of us want to be God's favourite? Sometimes each privilege or success is taken as proof that we are especially beloved. But Christianity won't give oxygen to that nonsense. Our entire community has just put aside immense time and energy to mark the birthday of Jesus. Now the letter to the Hebrews reminds us that we share the same parent as Jesus. The one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father, Jesus is not ashamed to call us brothers and sisters, and we share flesh and blood with Jesus. Wow. We are God's children, and with Jesus we share in the power of the resurrection and his victory over death. This changes everything. If God loves all God's children with equal passion, who are we to do anything different?

God's Love in Action

In a world that often feels divided, you've come together with churches across Australia to stand alongside those uprooted by conflict and disaster.

Thank you for standing with Act for Peace's local partners to bring practical care – as well as hope, peace, joy, love, and light – to people in urgent need around the world.

From Zimbabwe to India, Jordan to Kenya and all those affected by emergencies like we're seeing in the Ukraine, you are helping families heal from trauma and rebuild their lives. You are giving people the chance to overcome their difficulties and create stronger futures for themselves and their communities.

By joining together through the Christmas Bowl, you are helping build a world where all people have a safe place to belong. Thank you.

Use the online remittance form to return your gifts

To make your life easier in these challenging times, you can use the improved online remittance form under the link below to return your gifts. Please visit: www.christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au/remittanceform



Please remember to share the final Christmas Bowl video with your congregation. Thank you for joining us. If you'd like more information on how your Christmas Bowl gifts are making a difference, visit www.actforpeace.org.au/christmasbowl

The Christmas Bowl Online

The Christmas Bowl website has all the resources in this kit and more. Be sure to visit www.actforpeace.org.au/christmasbowl for all you'll need, including:

- **PowerPoints:** You can easily download PowerPoint presentations to use during your Christmas service and for every week of the Christmas season.
- **Videos:** Through the Christmas Bowl videos, you can hear how your gifts will help support Act for Peace's work with communities around the world affected by conflict and disaster.
- **Clipart for your pew sheets/bulletin and email notices:** You can download the weekly clipart inserts from the Christmas Bowl website and drop them directly into your pew sheets/bulletin and email notices.
- **Weekly stories from the field:** The full versions of each weekly story included in this toolkit are available to download on the website. Please feel free to share these with your congregation each week.
- **Children's Activities:** colouring in sheets.

You can also visit the website to learn more about the Christmas Bowl. Members of your congregation can give their Christmas Bowl gift safely online and include the name of your church. They will receive a receipt directly to their email address.



Keep up-to-date

Stay up-to-date with the latest news from Act for Peace and the Christmas Bowl. Our Facebook page will keep you informed on how other churches are celebrating the Christmas Bowl, how your gifts are making a difference and any upcoming events.

Like the Christmas Bowl on Facebook at www.facebook.com/christmasbowl and encourage your congregation to do the same.

Other ways to get involved

Join with other churches

Many churches like yours will gather in person or in a hybrid way this year to take part in the Christmas Bowl. Some choose to host a special carol service and invite nearby churches and the community to watch and sing along from home or host an online ecumenical prayer gathering. While keeping safe can make it harder to stay connected, it also presents opportunities to open our doors (virtual) to others this Christmas.



Kew East and Habitat Uniting Churches came together for a special Christmas Bowl service. Here, Reverend Bronwyn Daniels and Reverend Joan Wright Howie spoke of the many development programs and emergency appeals that their congregations have supported over so many years.

Celebrate the Christmas Bowl as a family

On Christmas Day 1949, an Australian Reverend named Frank Byatt placed an empty bowl of remembrance on the table before him. Frank urged his guests to reflect on their good fortunes and encouraged them to do something selfless for people around the world who were suffering as a result of World War II.

This Christmas, we invite you to place a bowl on your table as a sign of remembrance of our brothers and sisters around the world in urgent need.



Coffs Harbour Council of Churches decorated their own Christmas Bowl.

Other fundraising ideas

If you are feeling creative this Christmas, there are plenty of other ways that you can raise much needed funds to support people around the world. We have included a few suggestions below but the possibilities are limited only to your creativity and imagination!

- Share our Facebook posts and encourage friends and family to support.
- Host a virtual morning tea in support of the Christmas Bowl on Zoom after your service.
- Make and sell your own Christmas cards.
- Gather together online to sing your favourite Christmas Carols and share the link to your church's unique fundraising page during the gathering.



In Victoria, Ross and Kerry hold a cake stall fundraiser.

About Act for Peace

For more than 70 years, Act for Peace – the international humanitarian agency of the National Council of Churches - has brought people together to create a more just and peaceful world. As an expression of the life of churches in Australia we draw our inspiration from Jesus who demonstrated solidarity with those who were marginalised and oppressed.

We were founded in 1948, by the then Australian Council for the World Council of Churches, to provide urgently needed aid to refugees and others suffering in Europe from the horrors of the Second World War.

Leading this work was a Methodist minister from Victoria, Rev. Frank Byatt. His mission was to unify Australian Christians of all traditions to work together to put the word of the Gospel into action; and in 1949 he founded the visionary Christmas Bowl appeal which is now supported each year by tens of thousands of people from a wide range of denominations.

"The evangel is complete only when the action of the Gospel matches the message of the gospel."
Rev. Frank Byatt, 1954.

Since these humble beginnings, our work has expanded in both reach and impact through projects with local partners, and advocacy with governments and others in power. In 2008, our name changed to Act for Peace, and today we work to reduce forced displacement across Africa, the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific.

Working with others remains core to our DNA. We act to support uprooted people in their role as leaders, work in solidarity with long-term local partners, and leverage the strengths and reach of the global network of local ecumenical agencies of which we are a part. We're joined by thousands of churches and tens of thousands of other members of the public in Australia who share our values. And we work collaboratively as a member of local, regional and global networks and alliances, including the ACT Alliance, the Australian Council for International Development, the Australian Church Agency Network, the Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network, Micah Australia and the Emergency Action Alliance, all working together to combine resources, share expertise and achieve greater impact.

Why we're needed

(The problem we're solving)

Right now, we're living in a world of 'us' versus 'them'. Divisions are deepening, conflicts are escalating, and climate inaction is placing lives in peril. It means every day, more of us around the world are forced from our homes by conflict and disaster.

What we're working towards

(Our goals)

Together, we're working towards three goals to create a world where people uprooted by conflict and disaster have a safe place to belong. Acting, together, for peace.



SAFETY IN EXILE

We're working to ensure people can live in safety, with dignity, while displaced. This means they can access critical physical and emotional support (food, water, medicine, psychological support); lead activities and advocate for change; and ultimately have control over their lives, ensuring their safety, dignity and rights.



A PLACE TO BELONG

We're helping uprooted people find a permanent place to belong; supporting them to lead initiatives that help build a safe, permanent future, and holding countries to account so they share responsibility for supporting survivors of displacement.



REDUCED DISPLACEMENT

We're taking action so fewer people are forced to flee their homes; through community-led initiatives such as drought resistant farming and cyclone preparedness training, to reduce the impact of disasters and other displacement drivers. And we're encouraging governments and the public to take action to reduce conflict and climate-driven displacement.

How we're making it happen

(Our change strategy)

At the heart of our work is a powerful conviction: to create a just and peaceful society, we have to work together. It's both the right thing to do, and the only thing that will work.



BACKING DISPLACED PEOPLE

We're working in solidarity with local partners; building partnerships that mobilise the knowledge, determination, and skills of displaced people to create change; and resourcing locally-led initiatives that reduce displacement and create safety, dignity and belonging for uprooted people.



BUILDING UNITY

We're tackling the underlying drivers of inequality and displacement by reducing division and polarisation and building empathy in society. And we're creating opportunities for people to positively influence those around them, so they act in support of people who have been forcibly displaced.



TRANSFORMING THE SYSTEM

We're advocating for a radically different response to the displacement crisis. We're learning from displaced people, forming broad networks, and standing together to collectively influence regional, national and global authorities to share responsibility, resources and power equitably; and act on climate and conflicts.

Thank you for being a part of this important work.

CREATING, TOGETHER, A WORLD WHERE EVERYONE BELONGS

LEBANON:

Providing emergency support to help those recovering from the devastating blast in Beirut.

UKRAINE:

Providing immediate life-saving support and restoration of basic services for people affected by the war within Ukraine and for refugees in Hungary.

AFGHANISTAN:

Providing urgent food, shelter, health supplies and cash assistance for families displaced by the ongoing crisis. Giving girls a brighter future through improved access to quality education.

PAKISTAN:

Preventative and curative healthcare for rural families, especially mothers and children. Improving access to quality education.

MYANMAR:

Capacity building and training for communities to help prevent human rights abuses.

ASIA:

Advocating for refugee rights.

THE PHILIPPINES:

Disaster risk reduction and preparedness. Action and advocacy to support communities, including indigenous people, to access their human rights.

GAZA:

Healthcare for women and children and vocational training for young people. Providing psychosocial support to trauma impacted children.

WEST BANK:

Non-violent protective presence to vulnerable communities living under occupation.

JORDAN:

Providing urgently needed support for Syrian refugees including food rations, healthcare, education, livelihoods and counselling. Pilot graduation approach program for 50 families in Gaza camp, Jerash with market-led livelihoods, protection, and household mentoring.

INDIA:

Healthcare, livelihoods and empowerment programs for Sri Lankan refugees.

THAILAND:

Meaningful participation and leadership of refugees encamped in the Thai Myanmar border.

SRI LANKA:

Livelihoods and support services to help newly returned refugees reintegrate.

BANGLADESH:

Providing life-saving assistance including access to sanitation facilities, COVID-19 preventative hygiene kits, and medical care to Rohingya refugees.

VANUATU:

Support for communities to prepare, respond and recover from the impacts of natural disasters.

PACIFIC:

Support to the Pacific Church Partnership Advisory Network (PCPAN).

ETHIOPIA:

Emergency healthcare for critically ill or injured refugees, as well as counselling and vocational training. Water, hygiene and sanitation support, shelter, and distribution of household items.

KENYA:

Helping urban refugees in Nairobi with food.

ZIMBABWE:

Supporting farmers to be more resilient to climate change through conservation farming and responding to food insecurity with urgently needed food. Water, hygiene, and sanitation, psychosocial support, disaster risk reduction and peacebuilding work with internally displaced people.

INDONESIA:

Disaster preparedness and risk reduction activities to help communities stay safe during, and recover from, disasters. Supporting local communities, including marginalised people, through the health, psychosocial and economic impacts of the pandemic.

TONGA:

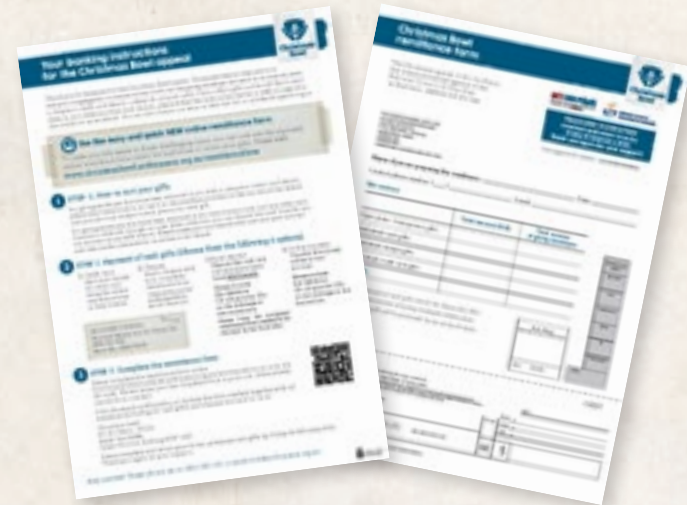
Improving safety and inclusion for people living with disability in Disaster Risk Management. Emergency response to support communities affected by the Hunga tsunami and volcano eruption.

AUSTRALIA:

Advocacy and campaigning for refugee rights. Collaborating with Australian Church Agencies to help more communities to be better prepared for disasters and to increase the impact of emergency response work.

This year, you helped to fund 30 projects in 20 countries and regions, improving the lives of thousands of people. Thank you.

How to return your gifts



4. Online transfer

Transfer the money online to our account:

Account Name: Act for Peace Ltd

BSB: 012 332

Account Number: 2323 75215

Please include the reference number: CB (Supporter ID) as the message in the transaction.

Please ensure you quote your reference number (as printed on your cover letter) so we can acknowledge and receipt your deposit.

Step 3: Complete the remittance form

Please complete the remittance form online. Visit www.christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au/remittanceform. We will email you the completed form to print out.

Alternatively use the remittance form enclosed.

Print the email confirmation, or include the form together with all envelopes (including for cash gifts) and cheques and post to us at:

Christmas Bowl
Act for Peace – NCCA
Reply Paid 66886
Queen Victoria Building NSW 1229

Please complete and return your forms, envelopes and gifts by Friday 17 February 2023.

Your gifts will help support Act for Peace's work with communities around the world affected by conflict and disaster.

If you require a new remittance form, contact the Christmas Bowl team on 1800 025 101 or info@actforpeace.org.au.

Use the online remittance form to return your gifts



To make your life easier in these challenging times, you can use the improved online remittance form using the link below to return your gifts, or simply scan the QR code above.
www.christmasbowl.actforpeace.org.au/remittanceform



FAQs



I need more resources, such as posters and giving envelopes. Can I receive extras?

If you'd like any extra resources, simply call 1800 025 101 or email info@actforpeace.org.au and we will send them to you as soon as possible.

What is the Christmas Bowl?

The Christmas Bowl is the longest-running ecumenical appeal in Australia. Started in 1949 by Rev. Frank Byatt of Victoria to help refugees from World War II, it is our way of forging a loving connection between Christian communities here in Australia and people around the world who have been forced from their homes by conflict or disaster.

I am organising an event for the Christmas Bowl, should I let you know? Yes please!

We would love to hear about your event so please tell us when and where it is going to happen. You can let us know via the Christmas Bowl Facebook page, via email at info@actforpeace.org.au or call us on 1800 025 101. Please send through photos of your event as we'd like to share them with other churches and with the Christmas Bowl community.

How can people give online?

Each church has been given its own unique donation page which you can share with your congregation members so they can give directly through your church. Alternatively, donations can be made on the Christmas Bowl website with the option of including your church details. Visit www.actforpeace.org.au/christmasbowl

How long do I have to send in the money raised?

Please send through the gifts you and your community collect for the Christmas Bowl with the completed remittance form by Friday 17 February 2023.

How much of the money raised goes to the programs?

In financial year 2021, 71.1% of Act for Peace's expenditure was used on our programs, advocacy, and community education work. 11.5% was spent on accountability and administration to ensure our programs and funds are used as effectively as possible. 17.4% was spent on fundraising. Every \$1 spent on fundraising returned \$6.31 for our work. This means that Act for Peace is contributing even more funds to the work on the ground to ensure the best possible impact. Please see our Annual Report on the Act for Peace website for more details.

Keeping it safe and legal.

Please ensure all fundraisers, participants and volunteers abide by and comply with all relevant legislation, regulations and best practice guidelines (as appropriate) in each State and Territory of Australia. Any fundraising event you organise must comply with the relevant Commonwealth, State and Territory legislation and local government regulations.

Any questions or comments? Contact us!

Call 1800 025 101, email info@actforpeace.org.au or send us a letter at Act for Peace, Locked Bag Q199, Queen Victoria Building, NSW 1230.

Acknowledgements

The Christmas Bowl team at Act for Peace would like to say a huge thank you to all the supporters and churches that help to continue the tradition of the Christmas Bowl. Last year, thanks to your support, almost \$1.9 million was raised by more than 1,000 churches from many denominations across Australia, which helped support people uprooted by conflict and disaster around the world.

Act for Peace and its local partners would like to especially thank the church congregations and member churches of the National Council of Churches in Australia, the State and Territory Ecumenical Councils and all the volunteers who contribute to the Christmas Bowl appeal.

We would also like to give a very special thank you to Rev Chris Bedding for writing the sermon starters and Rev Dr Amelia Koh-Butler for composing the liturgy.



Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Act for Peace gratefully acknowledges the support of the Australian Government through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).



Australian Government
Department of Home Affairs

Act for Peace gratefully acknowledges funding from the Australian Government Department of Home Affairs for our Sri Lanka project.



Christmas Bowl

**“Love your neighbour
as yourself.”**

Mark 12:31

Any questions or comments? Contact us!

Call 1800 025 101, email info@actforpeace.org.au or send us a letter at Act for Peace, Locked Bag Q199, Queen Victoria Building, NSW 1230.

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



National Council of
Churches in Australia

ACT FOR PEACE
CONFRONTING INJUSTICE TOGETHER
THROUGH THE **actalliance**