

Christ the King Sunday



Sharing God's love through the Christmas Bowl

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

Like 2020 before it, 2021 was a year of turbulence and disruption. The coronavirus pandemic continued to impact us all, with congregations again having to connect virtually, and many community members suffering.

Sadly, it's the poorest among us who have been hit hardest, particularly the 82 million people around the world uprooted from the stability of their homes by conflict or disaster. This year, conflicts in Ethiopia, Myanmar, Gaza and the fall of Afghanistan have created huge humanitarian crises.



In the midst of this division and chaos, the Christmas Bowl is a vital channel for expressing our unity in Christ. And it provides a powerful mechanism for sharing God's love, with those who need it, through practical Christian action.

Through your kind gifts to this year's Christmas Bowl, you'll help Act for Peace's local partners bring food, shelter and lifesaving support to those in urgent need.

And you will continue a tradition of Christian kindness that began more than 70 years ago with Rev Frank Byatt, a young minister in country Victoria.

Frank couldn't have foreseen how his simple act of compassion that evening would grow into the powerful Christmas Bowl tradition we now

know is celebrated in thousands of churches across Australia. And he couldn't have known how much it would be needed in our world today.

When Frank sat down to his Christmas dinner in 1949, he knew millions of people were starving in war-ravaged Europe. And he was compelled to offer help.

As we break bread with our loved ones this Christmas, our thoughts will be for our sisters and brothers who have been forced from their homes, and loved ones, by conflict or disaster.

Thank you for coming together again through the Christmas Bowl, to share God's love, and help create a world where uprooted people have a safe place to belong.

Sermon starter

The readings for Christ the King Sunday begin with a king's last words. David, who we first met as a shepherd boy, is now dying. Like Moses and Jacob before him, he offers 'famous last words'. Unusually for a King, he delivers an oracle. This is normally the work of a prophet, but in David's dying moments we get a glimpse of the 'prophet, priest and king' whom we will meet in his descendant, Jesus.

David leaves behind some wisdom for rulers of every age. 'One who rules over people justly, ruling in the fear of God, is like the light of morning, like the sun rising on a cloudless morning, gleaming from the rain on the grassy land'. It is an evocative set of images, but the irony is rich. King David has hardly been a model of righteousness and justice. But David is not looking retrospectively over his reign, but in anticipation of God's future. The dying king could not have known that one day, in David's town, would be born a saviour whose kingdom is 'not of this world'. But when he speaks with God's voice, he foreshadows a future in which his descendants are a blessing for the whole world.

As we end the current liturgical year and begin a new Advent, we yearn for a world in which rulers use their authority for justice. Through the Christmas Bowl, we can use our power to help others see the sun rising on a cloudless morning.



Bible readings

2 Samuel 23:1-7

King David on his deathbed affirms both the sovereignty and authority of God, and God's blessing of David's royal house.

Psalm 132:1-12, (13-18)

A song of blessing on the house of David.

Revelation 1:4b-8

Christ is affirmed as the 'faithful witness', 'first born of the dead' and 'ruler of all kings.'

John 18:33-37

Jesus describes his kingdom to Pilate as 'not of this world.'

Call to Worship

From Revelation 1

Grace to you and peace from God,
who was and is and is to come.

Grace to you and peace from
Jesus Christ,

**the faithful witness to God's love
and the ruler of all kings.**

Grace to you and peace from the
Holy Spirit,

**who calls us to worship God
this day!**

Prayers of Intercession:

Jesus said to Pilate,

*"For this I was born, and for this I came
into the world,*

to testify to the truth.

*Everyone who belongs to the truth
listens to my voice."*

Bringer of truth,
we pray for courage to search for
truth in suffering that is hidden,
to speak the truth of struggle that is
silenced
and to act for truth wherever justice
is needed.

**Open our eyes to the reality of
your kingdom;
open our ears to your voice of truth;
open our hands to the work to
which you call us in this season.
Amen**

Dedication of the Offering:

God of love, Alpha and Omega,
who was and is and is to come,
all that we have belongs to you.
We offer you our gifts of money
as a sign that we loosen our hold
on what we think belongs to us.

**Take what we offer and make
it abundant
for the work of your kingdom which
is not of this world.**

Amen.

Sending Out:

Let us go from here as servants of
Christ,
the ruler of all kings,
to live and work towards Christ's reign
of justice and peace and truth in
our world.

And the blessing of God...