



Christmas Bowl

Fourth Sunday of Advent Sharing love with the most vulnerable in Jordan

God's love often appears at the most difficult time. In Jordan, you are helping Syrian refugees harness their love and determination to help each other stay safe during the coronavirus pandemic.

Life was already tough for the millions of Syrian refugees living in camps in Jordan. Now they are suffering even more with the spread of COVID-19.

Reem* is a mother of five who knows how quickly coronavirus would spread in her community: a crowded urban slum with little sanitation. But the cost of face masks is out of reach for refugees like her, especially since the initial lockdown measures have affected the little income they had.

That's why Reem decided to start making cloth face masks for her community. Reem works with a team of volunteers and accesses sewing machines from Act for Peace's local partner, the Department of Service to Palestinian Refugees (DSPR).

She said:

"I am very happy that we can find practical solutions during the most difficult closure time in Jordan. We hope with this work, we can stop the pandemic in our camp."

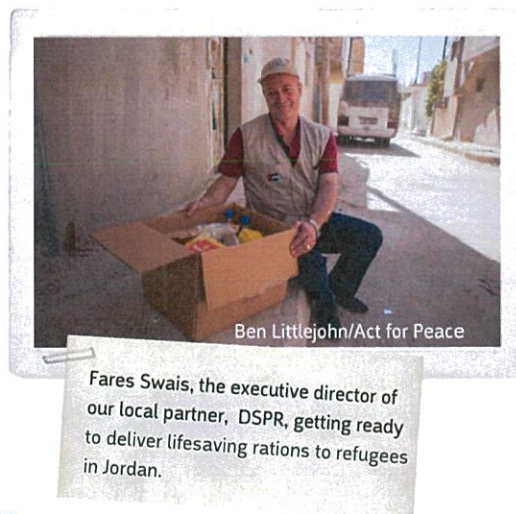
Love gives us the strength to overcome the most extraordinary obstacles. But there is still no end in sight to COVID-19 – or the war in Syria – for struggling refugees like Reem. Please share God's love with them this Christmas, so they can survive the hardships still to come.

Your love will translate to lifesaving food ration packs and medical care, jobs training and psychological support. You'll help women like Reem earn a living, and bring much-needed psychological care to refugee communities. They need support to heal from their past, and to live with the anguish of not knowing if they can ever return home.

As Fares Al Swais, Executive Director of DSPR said:

"We appreciate your support, solidarity and love. But in the aftermath of the lockdown, we expect more poverty. Our journey to help the vulnerable is not over."

**Reem's name has been changed to protect her identity as a refugee.*



Fares Swais, the executive director of our local partner, DSPR, getting ready to deliver lifesaving rations to refugees in Jordan.

Sermon starter

In our gospel lesson, we have the account of Mary learning that she was pregnant and of the role her pregnancy would play in God's relationship with the world. We also, through the words of the hymn known to the Christian church as the Magnificat, hear of Mary's celebration with her cousin Elizabeth, who is also pregnant. The two cousins wanted to share their experience of pregnancy with each other.

In the film *Love Actually*, one of my favourite of the interwoven plotlines concerned an aging popstar, played by Bill Nighy, who was experiencing some recent (and unexpected) success in a career that had been in the doldrums for some time. At a party on Christmas Eve, he nevertheless came to the conclusion that he would prefer to celebrate the holiday at home watching TV with a friend rather than partying with a group of A-list celebrities who would further help his struggling career.

As with last week's Christmas Bowl program, refugees feature prominently in this week's information. Syrian refugees in Jordan are assisted with emergency supplies of food, clothing, soap, and other material essentials, as well as with programs of counselling, job training, and childcare. They are now also sewing face masks to help keep their communities safe and provide work.

Liturgy

Bible readings

- **2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16:** Nathan's prophetic message challenges David's plan to build a 'house for God'. The presence of God cannot be contained in any one building
- **Psalms 89:1-4, 19-26:** Give thanks for God's steadfast love, God is faithful to the covenant promises to David
- **Luke 1:46b-55:** Mary's song proclaims God's reversals and the vision of a transformed world
- **Romans 16:25-27:** A benediction that celebrates the divine salvation plan
- **Luke 1:26-38:** The Angel Gabriel announces to Mary the coming miraculous birth



Call to Worship

"I am the Lord's servant. May it be as You have said."

A young woman named Mary opened her heart to your song.
She heard the promise that she would give birth to a son

who would break the bonds of oppression and transform the world

And she believed.

You are a God who acts to save

You are a God who does marvellous things!

You strengthen the weak.

You hear the prayers of the forgotten.

Come, let us give thanks to God! Let's sing of God's love forever!

Prayers of Intercession

Today we particularly pray for peace in Syria and Syrian refugees who have been given refuge in Jordan

In a world darkened by war clouds and the shadow of hunger, come into our world, as into Mary's womb

Come Lord Jesus

Into the forgotten places and places where human hope and expectation has dried up

Come Lord Jesus

Into the lives of the poor, bringing hope

Come Lord Jesus

Into the lives of the sad and despairing

Come Lord Jesus

Into the lives of the weary and homeless bringing rest and comfort

Come Lord Jesus.

Dedication of the Offering

Loving God, this Advent time we remember your gifts of hope, peace, joy and love. You call us to give generously and love extravagantly in response to all you have given us.

We give back to you all that we are, all that we have and all that we will be, through your love freely given to us.

May we share your love with our families, friends, neighbours and strangers, those nearby and far away.

As we experience the wonder of this season, may we know the beauty of giving and receiving.

We ask you to bless the work of the Australian Council of Churches and Act for Peace and all whose lives will be touched through giving to the Christmas Bowl this Christmas. **Amen**

Sending out

Loving God, our hearts echo the ancient cry:

Come, O come Emmanuel!

Go with God's love shining in your hearts. Look with eyes of compassion, be alert to the promptings of God's Spirit.

Be ready to share God's love with all whom you meet,

Be alert to the unfolding purposes of **God in your life and the lives of those around you.**

Amen. Come, O come Emmanuel!

Lighting of the Advent Candle (Love)

For Yolŋu people, Märr-ŋamathinyamirr is the deep love and affection we first learn in our families and kinship relationships that extends outwards to include God's creation. As Christmas draws near, we give thanks for God's great love. God sends Jesus not to condemn the world but to save it. He unites us into one family. God loved the world so much that he sent his Son, that believing in him, we should not perish but have everlasting life.

Thanks be to God.