



**Christmas  
Bowl**

**Second Sunday of Advent**  
Helping Rohingya refugees shape peaceful futures

**What does peace look like for the Rohingya people? After fleeing violence in Myanmar, they now face the threat of a deadly COVID-19 outbreak in Jamtoli refugee camp in Bangladesh.** For Rohingya people living in the world's largest refugee camp in Bangladesh, life was frightening enough before the coronavirus pandemic.

The refugees live in cramped conditions, in makeshift tents that can get swept away in the monsoon rains. Food is in short supply and a third of households don't have soap or regular access to water, so sickness is already rife.

Dr Mehidi Hassan and his medical teams see up to 1,500 people every day at the health clinics scattered across the camp. Dr Hassan said:

*“Without support from the outside world, it will be devastating here. People will die of lack of food and treatment.”*

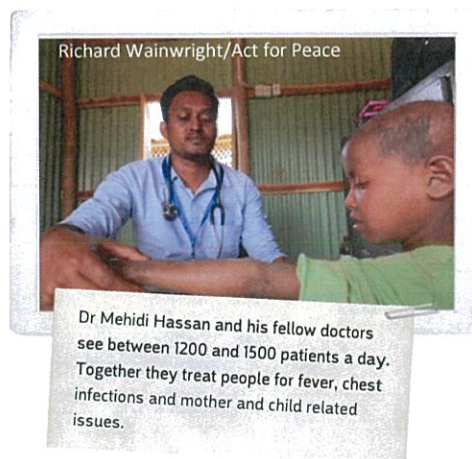
Now COVID-19 has reached Jamtoli refugee camp. There is widespread misinformation about the virus that is making it harder for doctors like Dr Hassan to stop a catastrophic outbreak.

**This Christmas, vulnerable communities urgently need your care. Please help them keep families safe through this pandemic, and shape the just, peaceful lives they deserve.**

Act for Peace's local partner, Christian Aid, has teamed up with doctors, community workers and Rohingya religious leaders to distribute vital health messages. They are teaching people how handwashing and physical distancing can help stop the virus' spread.

Christian Aid is also dispelling dangerous COVID-19 myths that might stop infected people from seeking medical care.

Together, we can help give refugees in different parts of the world the long term support they need to build safe, peaceful futures. **Christ tells us that peace is always possible. Please give to the Christmas Bowl and help bring the miracle of peace to refugee families.**





## Christmas Bowl

### Sermon starter

Our gospel lesson from the beginning of Mark's gospel intentionally echoes the words of our lesson from the 40th chapter of the Book of Isaiah. John the Baptist's mission is associated with that of the unnamed messenger in Isaiah: being a "voice in the wilderness", calling his listeners to prepare a way for our God even in the deepest desert. In neither reading do we find either unrelieved doom and gloom or unmixed celebration. Rather, in both readings, there is a mixture of judgement and expectation.

In the modern Christmas pop song "Fairytale of New York", sung by the Pogues and the late Kirsty MacColl, we find a similar mixture of emotions. An immigrant couple wakes up in the police cells on Christmas morning after sleeping off a hangover. They continue to carp at each other's faults, but are nevertheless able to rejoice that "the bells are ringing out on Christmas Day".

In many ways, the Christmas Bowl projects we support are a response to the mixed emotions of our lessons. God is active, building peace in the midst of our imperfect world. Through the Christmas Bowl, we too can participate in God's Peace building.

### Liturgy

#### Bible readings

- **Isaiah 40:1-11:** Words of comfort and hope offered to the fearful and despairing
- **Psalms 85:1-2, 8-13:** Returning to God leads to forgiveness of sins and fruitfulness in the land
- **2 Peter 3:8-15a:** Strive for peace and live holy lives as you wait for a new heaven and earth,
- **Mark 1:1-8:** John as Messenger announces God's coming in Christ and calls people to repentance





## Christmas Bowl

### Call to Worship

Let us come with a sense of expectation of the new things God can do in our lives.

**Show us God what we need to do personally and as a community to get ready for your coming.**

Come you who are fearful or despairing. Come those searching for peace. Come those needing healing and renewal. **We come to God in whom we find life.**

Hear God's call to repentance.

God invites us to plunge into cleansing waters.

**Returning to God we find forgiveness and refreshment. You restore our life. Praise be to God.**

### Prayers of Intercession

There is a voice crying in the wilderness, "Prepare the way of the Lord, make the paths straight for him." Today we especially pray for the Rohingya people who fled violence in Myanmar to find safety in Bangladesh.

**Come Prince of Peace.**

In places darkened by the shadow of hunger

**Come Prince of Peace.**

In a world of great wealth, where so many go without

**Come Prince of Peace.**

In a world of great knowledge, where many die of ignorance

**Come Prince of Peace.**

In a world of astonishing beauty, but so much destruction and disregard for God's creation

**Come Prince of Peace. Amen.**

### Dedication of the Offering

We give thanks for the prophetic voice of John the Baptist, and others whom God, has sent to point our feet along the path of true peace. May our giving contribute to the peace-building work of Christ as we take our place as co-workers with him for the healing of God's world. **Amen.**

### Sending out

We go to be part of God's reconstruction effort, levelling mountains of prejudice and lifting boulders of fear.

**Prince of Peace, make us partners with you in building peace.**

May God, Creator, Redeemer, and Life-giving Spirit strengthen and guide you always,

**We go strengthened by Christ to declare God's reign of peace. Amen.**

### Lighting of the Advent Candle (Peace)

Yolŋu people speak of right relationships between people, between people and God, and people and the land as Mägaya Rom. The Law gives meaning to our lives by teaching respectfulness in all our relationships. God sent Jesus into the world to bring peace and restore broken relationships. His reign brings Mägaya Rom.

May the God of Peace help us honour each other and cherish the gifts God gives of the land, sea, sky and water.

May the God of Peace help us live in peace. Amen



National Council of  
Churches in Australia

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