

Dear Christmas Bowl Supporter,

¹ *“Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.*

² *Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the LORD’S hand double for all her sins.*

³ *A voice cries out: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. (Isaiah40:1,3)*

The church seasons of Advent, Christmas and Epiphany are times of waiting, times of expectation and a time to discover that God is not only near but God is with us – Immanuel. People around the world today wait in the hope that God is near or that God is with them.

In the 6th century BCE Isaiah addressed the people in exile who were feeling dispirited from years of suffering and discrimination. They lacked hope and needed reassurance that God was different and worthy of their trust. God comes to bring comfort, tenderness and peace.

Twelve months ago I was privileged to visit the Philippines as part of a World Council of Churches Living Letters team. We listened as people shared their experience of years of suffering and injustice and their sense of hopelessness. The Philippines experiences chronic poverty, with 66 million people (70%) living on less than US\$1.95 per day. The poorest 10%, including many farmers, live on 18 peso (US\$0.40) per day.

Filipino farmers struggle for land rights and struggle to keep their land from the expanding operations of international corporations. This year one project supported by the Christmas Bowl is the Lumad communities (Indigenous people and farmers) in the southern province of Mindanao assisting to restore justice and their rights.

For these people, and others around the world, support through the Christmas Bowl gives renewed hope that suffering and discrimination can end and that God is near. Through the Christmas Bowl we are like a modern day Isaiah proclaiming “comfort,” “tenderness” and “peace”. These people know they are not alone, we stand with them and God is with us.

Together let us fill the Christmas Bowl so that God’s presence is real to the poorest people in our world and their hope renewed.

May your eyes be open to see God with us.

May your ears be ready to hear Jesus’ words of peace.

May your lives be willing to bring hope to the world.

Grace and Peace,



The Reverend Tara Curlewis
General Secretary
National Council of Churches in Australia