



# CHRISTMAS GUIDE 2022

A time for family, gratitude  
and generosity

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for the family



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End poverty  
Promote justice  
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# A Christmas message from Caritas Australia

As 2022 comes to an end and with the Christmas season soon upon us, I would like to take this opportunity to reflect on this year.

For many vulnerable communities around the world, 2022 has been even more challenging than 2020 and 2021. This year has been filled with turmoil and crises brought on by political upheaval, war, conflict and natural disasters exacerbated by climate change.

Throughout the year, the unwavering compassion and generosity of Caritas Australia's supporters have allowed us to reach out to those affected by these crises and address their most imperative needs – be it in the form of clean water, hygiene and sanitation, access to essential services or humanitarian assistance.

Thanks to the generosity of people like you, we have been able to provide much-needed support to our sisters and brothers in Ukraine currently being affected by war, to vulnerable communities across Africa experiencing a food crisis and to communities across Asia and the Pacific who have been subjected to extreme weather events caused by climate change.

Christmas is a time for us to be renewed in our hope and to show kindness and compassion to those around us. It is a time for us to be in touch with the miracle that is Christ in our lives and in our world. It is a time for us to be more and to lend a helping hand to the stranger on the road. And ultimately, a time to express our gratitude.

On behalf of everyone at Caritas Australia, I would like to thank you for your generosity and support. I hope that we can continue to work together to build a better tomorrow for all and wish you and your family a safe and merry Christmas.



**With gratitude,**

*Kirsty Robertson*

**Kirsty Robertson  
Chief Executive Officer  
Caritas Australia**





# Advent Resources

Caritas Australia's Advent resources are designed to help parishes and school students to learn about how they can make a difference in the world, whilst exploring the themes of hope, peace, joy and love. These resources are divided into the four weeks of Advent and invite readers to reflect on the Gospel, learn about the communities that Caritas Australia serves, pray and take action.

Caritas Australia's Advent resources are available on our website, by visiting <https://www.caritas.org.au/advent>.

We have also created an Advent wreath guide. This guide includes information about the Advent wreath, the symbols, a blessing, and a template to make your own paper version.

The Advent wreath is a traditional centrepiece leading up to the Christmas season. A candle is lit on each of the four Sundays preceding Christmas.

The first candle (violet) represents hope, the second (violet) peace, the third (rose) joy, and the fourth (violet) love. The central white candle is lit on Christmas Day and represents Christ.

The wreath itself is also symbolic. The circle of evergreen in which the candles are placed represents everlasting life. The seedpods, nuts and cones used to decorate the wreath are symbolic of life and resurrection, the laurel signifies victory over persecution and suffering, pine and holly signify immortality, and fruits (such as apples) represent the nourishing fruitfulness of the Christian life.

To download Caritas Australia's Advent Wreath Guide, please visit <https://www.caritas.org.au/resources/school-resources/advent-wreath-guide/>



# Christmas activities for the family

Christmas invites us all to show kindness and compassion, especially towards those who are alone or living in hardship.

This time of the year is celebrated in many ways across the world, with countless different traditions. Ultimately, these always involve gathering around with family and friends, expressing gratitude for the blessings we have received, and rejoicing in unity and faith.

You can also create new traditions with your friends and family. To help you with this, we have listed a few fun activities you can do during this special time:

## 1. **Advent Wreath**

Create an Advent wreath using plants and flowers from your garden, pine cones and fruits. You will need four candles – one for each week. For the weeks of Hope, Peace and Love, use purple candles. For the week of Joy, use a pink candle. Light a candle at the beginning of each week.

## 2. **Spreading love**

To spread love and kindness during this holy season, write a Christmas message on a piece of paper or a card and put it into one of your neighbours' letterboxes. You can sign this with your name, or leave it as anonymous. In your letter, challenge them to do the same.

## 3. **Join in community events**

Look for ways to become closer to those around you by looking at what activities are taking place in your community. Whether it's a

Christmas service in your parish or activities being hosted by your local community centre, ask how you can help, offer to participate or simply attend.

## 4. **Protecting our common home**

As issues regarding climate justice continue to affect vulnerable communities across the world, we are called to protect our common home. This is a challenge that we should all take part in, as one human family. As part of this challenge, we invite you to host an arts and crafts session with your friends and/or family to make Christmas decorations using recycled materials found in your home (e.g. pieces of cardboard, cloth, yarn, etc.).

## 5. **Write a Christmas card**

Write a Christmas card to a friend or a family member whom you have not spoken to in a very long time. Remind them how much they mean to you.



# Caritas Christmas Cookies

As the food crisis continues to worsen across countries in Africa, we are reminded of the value of food, and the importance of avoiding food waste – especially around Christmas.

Research has shown that Australians throw away more than \$36 billion worth of food each year. This problem only gets worse around the holidays. During the festive period food waste increases by a staggering 30 per cent and contributes to the approximately 2.5 million tonnes of food that gets tossed in the bin across Australian homes each year.

This Christmas, you can help change these statistics by encouraging everyone to think about food waste.

We have come up with this delicious, zero waste cookie recipe that uses ingredients that might already be in your pantry. You can make these with your family and share them with your friends and neighbours.

## Ingredients

- 125g salted butter, at room temperature
- 1/2 cup (115g) caster sugar
- 1/4 cup (60ml) milk
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 1/2 cups (225g) self-raising flour
- 1/2 cup (70g) custard powder
- Red or burgundy sprinkles (optional).

## Method

Preheat oven to 180°C and line two baking trays with baking paper. Then, using an electric beater, beat the butter and sugar until pale and creamy. Beat in milk and vanilla extract and fold in the flour and custard powder.

Press the dough into a ball and refrigerate for 30 minutes to rest. Divide the dough into manageable portions. Roll out one portion on a sheet of non-stick baking paper to about 1cm thick. Use Christmas cookie cutters to cut shapes and place on the trays. Decorate with sprinkles.

Bake for 10 minutes or until light golden. Cool for 5 minutes on the trays before transferring to a wire rack to cool completely. Repeat with remaining dough.

**Enjoy!** And remember – the secret ingredient is always Compassion!





# Lan's Story

Lan with her eight-year-old son, Quan, and 12-year-old daughter, Loan. Photo: Phan Tan Lam.

Today more than ever, Christmas acts as a timely reminder of how important it is to show solidarity towards those in need. As this holy season draws near and we look forward to gathering in love with friends and family to celebrate Jesus' birth, we also think of all the vulnerable people across the world that need support this Christmas.

Thirty-nine-year-old Lan\* is a mother of three children, living in the Quang Tri province in Vietnam. Her eight-year-old son, Quan\*, and 12-year-old daughter, Loan\*, both live with a vision impairment.

Lan often had to take her children to the capital, Hanoi, for eye treatment. But it was costly for her family to travel, as she and her husband relied on manual work and farming to make a living. Their income was not stable, life was tough and Lan feared for the future of her children.

With your support, Lan participated in the Empowerment of People with Disabilities program supported by Caritas Australia's partner, the Centre for Sustainable Rural Development (SRD). Through the program, Quan and Loan were able to join community-based classrooms so that they could interact with other children living with disabilities. Lan has volunteered to help run the classes and is now a leader of a parents' group in her area. Her children are more confident and are looking forward to completing their schooling.

*This program is also supported by the Australian Government, through the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP).*

\*Names have been changed to protect their identity

## Did you know?

Some communities in Vietnam like to enjoy the 'reveillon', a traditional French dinner held on Christmas Eve. It's famed for its luxurious dishes like oysters, escargot and the *bûche de Noël*, a chocolate, log-shaped cake for dessert.

In Vietnam, Santa Claus is known as 'Ông già Noel', meaning 'Christmas old man'.

Christmas is not a formal holiday in Vietnam because most people are not a part of any religion. However, many citizens gather in a particular location for Christmas celebrations by throwing confetti and having fun. They may also visit churches to enjoy decorations and other festivities.



# A year of emergencies

This year has proved to be an uphill battle for so many vulnerable communities across the world. Throughout 2022, we have witnessed an unprecedented number of crises unfold right before our eyes and the impact that these have had on the livelihoods of affected communities. As we look forward to spending time with our loved ones during the holiday season, we are also reminded of those currently experiencing war, hunger and the impacts of climate change.



## Ukraine

The war in Ukraine continues to escalate with no sign of slowing down.

Currently, civilian infrastructure in Ukraine continues to be targeted including water supplies, gas and electric supplies, hospitals, and homes. Caritas Ukraine has assisted more than 1.5 million people since the conflict began, while Caritas Spes Ukraine has supported more than 2.4 million people affected by the war.

Ukrainian families trying to keep warm at Ukraine-Moldova border. Photo: Marijn Fidler.

## Africa Food Crisis

This year, vulnerable communities across eastern Africa have faced multiple challenges at once: drought, rising food and fuel prices, COVID-19, locust plagues and ongoing conflict and displacement. Currently, over 81.6 million people are facing high acute food insecurity across the region. Unless urgent action is taken, millions will face the prospect of famine. Our partners are on the ground responding urgently to this unfolding humanitarian crisis.

Ayoyo is a volunteer complaints officer who supports her community in southern Ethiopia. Photo: Zacharias Abubeker.



## Pakistan floods

In 2022, we also saw the devastating floods that struck Pakistan. Due to climate change a dangerous combination of factors have combined to create the perfect storm for deadly flooding in Pakistan, leaving a trail of destruction and claiming the lives of more than 1,100 people.

Flash flooding has devastated the lives of millions across Pakistan. Photo: Caritas Pakistan

This Christmas Guide was brought to you by Caritas Australia.  
Thanks to your generosity we can continue to support vulnerable  
communities to create lasting change in their lives  
- a gift that lasts forever.



Share joy this **Christmas** with a  
**Global Gift** that   
can change a life

**Buy Global Gifts** 

If you would like to give the gift of hope this Christmas, why not buy a Global Gift?  
Global Gifts are Caritas Australia's charitable Christmas cards. The funds raised  
from these gift cards go towards supporting our work with vulnerable communities  
around the globe, including right here in Australia.

[www.globalgifts.org.au](http://www.globalgifts.org.au)

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End poverty  
Promote justice  
Uphold dignity