

## **TRANSCRIPT**

### **0:00 Introduction**

**Pastor Carla Blakley:**

Hi, my name is Pastor Carla Blakley, and I'm the Director of Community and Donor Relations with Canadian Lutheran World Relief. I hope you're doing well. What a difficult time we find ourselves right now with this global pandemic? My heart and my prayer reaches out to all of Canadian Lutheran World Relief donors and pastors, congregations, and communities of focus. One of my favorite hymns that you're going to hear in the service of the word video today is the Canticle of the Turning, where Mary praises God, and yet calls down systems of oppression and works for justice. In the Canticle of the Turning, she reminds us that the world is about to turn, that dawn is coming. It's a hope we all hang onto, that the world is about to turn, that dawn of a new beginning is coming where people won't live without access to water, to health, to education, and to food.

When you give a gift from the heart like this chicken, it not only gives people self-reliance, it gives them a gift of hope. In the video that you're about to watch, you will hear from the program director from Canadian Lutheran World Relief, my colleague Akililu Hunqe, who talks about his time growing up in Kenya and reflects on the gifts of the Magi. You'll also hear once again, powerful music from Inshallah, and you'll hear more about the stories behind the gifts from the heart. Please enjoy.

### **1:55 Gathering Song**

**Debbie Lou Ludolph:**

My name's Debbie Lou Ludolph. And I'm the director of Inshallah at Martin Luther University College in Waterloo. The Canticle of the Turning is a paraphrase of Mary's prophetic song that you'll find in Luke chapter one. And we sing a version written to an Irish tune. My heart shall sing of the day you bring the fires of your justice burn, wipe away all tears for the dawn draws near and the world is about to turn.

### **2:35 Inshallah Singing**

### **5:50 Greeting**

**Pastor Carla Blakley:**

The grace of our Lord, Jesus Christ, the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you, and also with you.

## 6:05 *Opening Prayer*

**Julio Montas:**

Let God of Love and Hope, During this season of Advent, May we pause and reflect. We know that even in challenging times, in times of a global pandemic, In times when we are afraid, when loved ones have died, or are sick. You bring HOPE to the world. A hope that fills our hearts. A hope that surrounds us in love. A hope that Inspires us to be generous with your love. A hope that Inspires us to be generous with your peace. Be in our hearts, Warm our virtual gatherings this season, where ever in the world they may be. Inspire us to action. Inspire us to reach out with justice and love to uncover systems of oppression, to relieve food insecurity, to challenge racial injustice. So all can live in hope, peace, freedom and love. Let it be so. In Jesus name we pray, Amen

## 7:30 *Reflection*

**Akililu Hunqe:**

The gospel is taken from the book of Matthew chapter two, verse one to 12. In the time of King Herod after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking where is the child who has been born King of the Jews. For, we have saw his star rising and I've come to pay him homage. When King Herod heard this, he was frightened and all of Jerusalem with him. And according together, all of the chief priest and the scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. They told him in Bethlehem of Judea, for it's been written by the prophet, a new Bethlehem in the land of Judah, and by no means least among the rulers of Judah. And from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people, Israel.

Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. Then he send them to Bethlehem saying, "Go and search diligently for the child and when you have found him, bring me words so that I may also go and pay him homage." But when they had the King, they set out there, ahead of them went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. When they saw the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary, his mother, and they knelt down and pay him homage. Then opening their treasure chest, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road. The word of God.

We are living in unprecedented times, and Christmas will look different for many people around the world this year. Yet the spirit of the season remains. Spreading joy, sharing love, cultivating hope and celebrating our greatest gift, Jesus. Those of you who are parents would agree with me that there's nothing quite like the excitement of a child opening a present on a Christmas morning. But for many people around the world, receiving a Christmas gift is simply not a possibility because of the realities of poverty. One of the memories of my childhood growing up in Northern Kenya was helping my mother push an empty wheelbarrow to a local community center where we had gone to receive the gift of food. You see, we lived in a community that faced cyclical drought and chronic food

insecurity. And that gift meant that my family and my community would be able to have nutritious food for the remainder of the lean season.

Today, the world faces a greater challenge than any before, as the COVID-19 pandemic threatens to undo many years of progress in poverty eradication while exacerbating the pre-existing inequalities and exposing the fragility of our systems. Here is the reality. This year alone, it is estimated that between 100 million people, 215 million people would be plunked into extreme poverty because of COVID-19. The effects of the lockdowns, the job losses, economic disruptions have disproportionately affected extremely poor and marginalized communities. And so for the millions of people who depend on work in the informal economy, it means that they have no income and any little saving that they had has already dried up. But here is even a greater reality, love is racing to meet that challenge.

I often look back and reflect on the gift that is the center of this holiday. It is easy to think about Christmas as a time that is primarily about giving and receiving gifts. But when I think about Christmas, I think about hope. When I consider the incredible gifts of Jesus and the gifts of hope, of healing, of grace, of mercy, of forgiveness that you brought to the ad, it inspires me to view this season as a time I can be used to be parts of God's narrative of hope and redemption. It's clear through the biblical narrative, that generosity is close to the heart of God. In the Christmas story we read, we have the Magi who come to visit Jesus. They come to him with gifts of gold, of frankincense and myrrh. I'm a curious person, so I know past thoughts was, "Why are those gifts?"

I remember reading this passage as a young adult, and thinking to myself that these are rather random and useless gifts to give to an infant. As an adult, I realize now that there's significance in each of those gifts based on the culture of the day. And I said, read the comments that are about this passage found in Matthew chapter two. The other state that it's likely that when Joseph, Mary and Jesus fled to Egypt, the Magi's gift of gold helped to sustain them financially throughout that period. The generosity of the Magi was one part of God's story of redemption and hope for the world. And they probably never thought about the impact of that one act of generosity. And so as we come to this Christmas season this year, you and I want to give gifts that are intentional, meaningful, and have potential to bring joy to the people who receive them.

As families and communities face unprecedented crisis because of the COVID-19 pandemic, your gift can do more to be able to meet a practical need. As the Director of Programs at Canadian Lutheran World Relief, I get to see firsthand how the different gifts of Heart Catalog impact the lives of 1000s of people. I've seen the gifts of sharing life saving food in an emergency. I've seen how the generosity of ordinary people provided clean water and fresh food in a place where food scarcely grow. I've seen how mothers not only have had the opportunity for food for their families, but also I saw hope. These are all beautiful examples of people of God coming together to be part of God's narrative of hope and redemption. What if we saw the season as a time when we get to be generous with our lives, bringing hope to others in a tangible way. What if we decided to engage in acts of generosity this Christmas season, even if they seem to be small and insignificant.

The reality is this, we have the ultimate gift and the opportunity to share the message

of hope, of renewal and restoration that Jesus brings, with our words, but also with our actions. We get to give gifts that will help settle refugees here in Canada, providing a caring community at home. We get to give gifts of God's whose milk will nourish children of a widow or emergency food to people who have fled their homes in the middle of the night to escape horrific violence. We do all these with the goal of being the hands and feet of Jesus, obeying what he says in First John 3:18, to love others around the world with actions and in truth. That is our invitation to be part of God's narrative of hope and redemption. Amen.

**15:33 Pastor Carla Blakley:**

So, Rachel, you know auntie works for Canadian Lutheran World Relief, and this is our gift catalog this year. So what I thought we could do is if you were to pick out a gift for your mom and dad, what would you pick? Should we look at a few? So emergency food. So Canadian Lutheran World Relief works all around the world in situations where people have had to run away because of war or natural disaster or violence. And so when they have to set up in a new place, sometimes they need food. Drinking water is so important like you and I have water, but some people don't have access to water, so we can buy drinking water, a well. We can buy hand sanitation, a hand washing station because sometimes they don't have access to that or build a latrine, because toilets are important.

A pair of goats. Do you think your dad would like a pair of goats. Micro climate insurance. That's an important one. That's a new gift that we have. That's very important for farmers. If they need insurance against the weather, that's an important gift. Providing a safe birth for babies. That's important. What about chickens? A flock of chickens. I was out the other day with some chickens and I got to hold one. Have you ever held a chicken? I got to hold a little chicken and talk to it and it was very nice. But then it flew away on me, but it was super fun. Maybe I'll have to come sometime and see these chickens and the roosters. They were making so much noise. So if you had to choose a gift for your mom and dad, what would it be for Christmas? One of these. What do you think? Blanket. Oh, that's a great idea. The blankets are back here. That's a great idea. And they have to share the blanket then.

Okay. What about for grandma, Gail? I think we should get grandma Gail, a pair of goats? No. See, we actually don't give grandma Gail, a pair of goats. We say we bought her a pair of goats and then over in one of the countries where we work, they actually get the goats. But grandma Gail gets the card saying thank you that you bought people in Africa or the Middle East goats. And over there, it's when they have a situation of a light and they need a livelihood, they might say, "Hey, I would like to start with some goats." What I want to talk to you about is tiny hearts. This is just for young people like you. And what you can do is you get this whole sheet and now you see here's the chicken is \$5. A bee is \$5. A tree is \$5. A seed is \$5. A water jug is eight. Garden tools and a goat.

So these are stickers. So you get to pick what you want to do and put it on here. So Sunday schools can order one of these tiny heart stickers. Grandparents can order this for their children and grandchildren can. Would you like to do some stickers? Sure. So you can put the seeds on here, bees and the whole garden is \$75. So if grandparents ordered this for their children or the grandchildren, the grandchildren get to play with the stickers and then the grandparents can pay \$75. And that goes towards livelihoods, programming or

all of the program that CLWR does. Oh, good job. Those are trees. Trees are so important, especially if you're in an area that doesn't have trees. Trees give shade, trees, give fruit. So this is how we teach children about compassion in the world and explain about systems in the world that aren't as good as they are in Canada.

And sometimes when people have to flee difficult situations that children can start learning about compassion, about giving, about why generosity and helping others out is so important. A goat. Perfect. If you haven't received your gifts from the Heart Catalog, be sure to call our office or go online, order your Gifts from the Heart catalog or actually all of this is online. And this year due to the pandemic and us having a very limited staff in the office due to COVID closers, we'd be really happy if you could use this online, but feel free to order these. We can mail these out, your tiny hearts' posters, and stickers. And have fun teaching children about philanthropy and generosity in the world.

## **20:35 Prayers of the People**

**Pastor Carla Blakley:**

Let us pray. God of love, be with us this advent journey, calm our hearts, still our fears as we live within a global pandemic. Everything feels different. Churches are closed. Families are separated. Some are sick. Some have died. Comfort those who experience depression, addiction, all who are alone and frayed. Remind us that your love is steadfast. Oh, God of hope, give us your peace.

**Rachael Toth:**

God of hope be with us in our advent journey. Let us find new opportunities to connect and inspire us to be people outside the boundaries of church walls. Give us hearts of compassion, remind us that your hope is steadfast.

**Pastor Carla Blakley:**

Oh, God of hope, give us your peace. God of peace, be with us this advent journey, like Mary who raised her voice in praise, raise our voices. Like Mary who called on hope to challenge situations of oppression, raise our voices against oppressive systems. Open our eyes to injustice in the world, stir our hearts to action. Remind us that your peace is steadfast. Oh, God of hope, give us peace. You want to do another?

**Rachael Toth:**

Sure. God of creation be with us in our advent journey. Water gives life. Water is life. Water is necessary for life. Open pathways so all people have access to life's sustaining water, remove systems that block access to food, to health, to education, to sustainable livelihoods, to ensure the wellbeing of all your children. Open your ears to hear the groaning of mother earth and to work for sustainable solutions. Remind us your creation is steadfast.

**Pastor Carla Blakley:**

Oh, God of hope, give us your peace. God of the journey, be with us on our advent journey. Be with so many who journey, especially those whose journey is to flee violence, drought,

food insecurity, and natural disasters. Walk with all, protect them oh, God, give them shelter as your son was given shelter. Wrap them in protection as mother's arms, bring them to wise counsel, a star to guide them and safety from those who would bring harm to them. Remind us that you are steadfast as you journey with us. Oh, God of hope give us your peace. Your turn.

**Rachael Toth:**

God of light, be with us on our advent journey, shine the light on the path of those who work for justice in the world, for the work of CLWR, our partners Lutheran World Federation, for every field office worker around the world. Shine light on the front line health workers and all essential workers. Inspire world leaders to lead with compassion. Remind us of your steadfast light.

**Pastor Carla Blakley:**

Oh, God of hope, give us your peace. Christ child be with us on our advent journey, from the stable and beyond. In this season of expectation, we prepare for your birth. We prepare for love being born into our world and into our hearts. Remind us of your steadfast love. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

**25:10 *Blessing and Sending Song***

**Robb Wilson:**

Hi, I'm Robb Wilson. I'm a member of Inshallah at Martin Luther University College in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada. The song: There Is No Child So Small is a gift from New Zealand and it's often referred to as the Carroll of the least child. The music is by Colin Gibson and the lyrics are by Shirley Erena Murray. The lyrics help us think of children around the world, children experiencing poverty, brokenness and oppression. Song helps us as a choir sing towards active peacemaking and justice doing and as a true call of response to the Christmas story, the Carol of the least child.

**26:10 *Inshallah Singing***

**28:52 Pastor Carla Blakley:**

Thank you for purchasing a gift from Canadian Lutheran World Relief gifts from the Heart Christmas Catalog. When you purchase a gift like these chickens or goats or garden tools or access to clean water, you're providing great hope for people in the world. Thank you for your generosity. Thank you for your partnership with Canadian Lutheran World Relief as we serve to make the world a better place. Many blessings this Christmas, this advent season.

**29:25 Go in Peace. Serve the Lord.**

29:45 **Credits**

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**There is no child**

Words: Shirley Erena Murray © 2008, Hope Publishing Company.

Music: Colin Gison © 2009, New Zealand Hymnbook Trust.

**Canticle of the Turning**

Words (based on the Magnificat) and Arrangement: Rory Conney © 1990, GIA Publications Inc.

Music: Traditional Irish.

Thanks to Gail and Jenelle Kuhn for the farm animals.