

Just love...

Jo Jones *reflects on* Acts 11:1-18, Psalm 148, Revelation 21:1-6 and John 13:31-35

Visiting Bangladesh with Christian Aid, I met a group of Muslim women who were receiving small loans to run businesses. One woman described how, as a result of a loan, she had been able to improve the roof on her house and, when her son got married, she could afford to give him a present. Women training as village midwives showed me their home delivery kits. They contained the tiniest bar of soap, a sheet of plastic so the baby had somewhere clean to land, a razorblade to cut the cord, and a piece of string to tie it. They told me that the most

important thing they had learned was to identify when a woman was in difficulties in early stages of labour and get her to hospital.

Jesus gives the command "love one another". Peter has the vision that this love is not limited to those with whom we are familiar, whose culture we understand, but is for all. John's vision is of a new heaven and earth, where God is not only spreading his tent over us in protection (Revelation 7), but is dwelling with us.

Each time we offer love, we are part of making this new kingdom of God real. 🍵

Lord, we pray for the coming of a new heaven and new earth, where we truly love you, ourselves and each other. May knowing that you dwell with us give us strength to offer what we have to help all to be able to live life in all its fullness. Amen.

International Day of Families

Today is designated International Day of Families by the United Nations. Caroline Hodgson reflects on the Christian perspective on the family.

During the 1980s the United Nations began to focus attention on the family. Since then, the UN reports, there is a general trend for smaller families, as the number of single-parent households grows.

In addition, particularly in the West, families are changing not only in terms of size, but also structure and gender balance. More children are parented by

same-sex couples and some experience one or both parents transitioning.

The Church needs to learn how to support families of every shape, size and structure, unconditionally and without judgement. Just as the Holy Family faced condemnation and judgement, it's vital to remember that every family has within it the potential for greatness, and a part to play in God's great plan.

www.un.org/en/observances/international-day-of-families 🍵



Caroline Chisholm

by Caroline Hodgson

Caroline Chisholm (1808-1877), who is commemorated in the lectionary tomorrow, is remembered for her work with immigrants in Australia.

When she and her husband were stationed in Madras, Caroline founded a school for the daughters of European soldiers, to provide a practical education in writing, cookery, housekeeping and nursing.

In 1838 the family set sail for Sydney, where Caroline became

aware of the plight of young women who arrived in Australia without money, friends, family or work. Many turned to prostitution to survive. She found placements for many of them in shelters, helping them to find permanent places to stay.

When Captain Chisholm returned to India in 1840, he encouraged his wife to continue her philanthropic efforts in Sydney. She set up a home for young women and organised others in rural locations. The scheme was soon extended to support immigrant families and young men. During her seven years in Australia, Caroline placed over eleven thousand people in homes and jobs. 🍵

“Have courage for the great sorrows of life and patience for the small ones. And when you have finished your daily task, go to sleep in peace. God is awake.”

Victor Hugo (1802-1885), French poet, novelist and playwright