



Maligayang Pasko (Happy Christmas)!

Merry Christmas! As we draw near to the end of 2024, we wanted to take this moment to say a HUGE thank you for your support of Hands of Mercy this year. We couldn't have done this year without you!

The difference you've made in 2024:

- You've served nutritious meals to 175 malnourished children, four days a week, every week, across eight different areas in the squatter communities.
- You've sponsored 102 children in education – helping them through school and/or college and investing in their lives to break the cycle of poverty.
- You've provided food for 54 families (approximately 220 people).
- You've helped to provide a new house for Helen, one of the Hands of Mercy Team members, after her home was burnt down in a fire in Block 40 last year.



Thank you for bringing hope to men, women and children who were so often caught up in hopelessness, poverty and despair.

News from 2024

We very sadly lost Auntie Myrna this year, after she had a long-running battle with cancer. Auntie Myrna was a diligent, faithful member of the Hands of Mercy team, with an irrepressible sense of humour! She was a great blessing and we miss her greatly. We are thankful that she is no longer in pain and that she is now with the Lord.

Ichthus, Hands of Mercy's livelihood programme which sells bottled, filtered water, has grown its customer base which is a real answer to prayer. They make a small surplus each month and through that, they sponsor two children through Hands of Mercy. Praise God!

Give a gift this Christmas

If you sponsor a child or family, you will find a Christmas card from them enclosed with this letter. Every child or family sponsored really appreciates the support of their sponsor and their card to you is a small token of their love and appreciation. Please consider sending a Christmas gift to your sponsored child or family – a gift of £15-£20 for a child and £20-£25 for a family will make a significant difference. Please send this as soon as possible so that we can transfer the gift in good time.



Thank you for all your love, support and prayers throughout this year – it means so much. We wish you a blessed Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Sam

Samantha Graham
Chair, Hands of Mercy International, December 2024



Hands of Mercy Quarterly Update & Prayers: Dec 2024 – Feb 2025

Reflection from Sam Graham, Chair

God bless you and thank you for all that you do to support Hands of Mercy. Every meal served, every food package given to a family living in poverty and every child sponsored with their education is an outworking of Jesus' love. Thank you for being His hands and feet to families living in poverty in the Philippines.

As we head into the Christmas season, I don't know about you but I can find that life can become VERY busy! I am encouraged that Jesus invites us into His rest: "Come unto Me all you who are weary and heavy burdened and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). Or in a different way, God says: "take a moment, notice Me, remember that I am with you and that I am your God" (Psalm 46:10, paraphrase). May you know God's love, peace and rest this Christmas and New Year. Thank you again for your support and prayers for Hands of Mercy.

God bless you,

Sam

Samantha Graham, Chair, Hands of Mercy International

Christmas Parties for Children in the Squatter Communities

Every year, the Hands of Mercy team organise Christmas parties for children living in the squatter communities who are either sponsored through the Child Sponsorship Programme (CSP) or receive food through the Supplementary Feeding Programme (SFP).

The parties are a highlight for the CSP children who have a once-in-a-year opportunity to eat somewhere like McDonalds or Jollibee (a popular Filipino fast food chain). Children who receive food through the SFP receive a special meal of chicken and spaghetti in their community. All the children also receive a small gift. It is a high point of the year for so many children living in poverty who would never have this experience otherwise.

One child (pictured) said: "Christmas parties are one of the best parties for kids like me because I feel the presence of Christmas as well as the essence of giving.



"It makes me feel happy whenever I receive a gift and get to eat delicious foods such as fried chicken and spaghetti at McDonalds [Chair's note – the McDonalds' menu in the Philippines is a bit different to ours!]

"I can say that I am blessed because not every child has a chance like this. I am grateful because God gives us kind people to support and give sponsorship to our parties. I am thankful as well to the organisers and all the staff behind the successful parties. All the memories [of] the parties I attended will always be part of my childhood dream."



We asked Sally Escoto, Director of Hands of Mercy, why the Christmas parties were so important to the children.

“Hands of Mercy does Christmas parties for the CSP and SFP children to bring happiness to the children. This is the only time that they would be able to go to Jollibee or McDonalds and eat chicken with spaghetti. Hands of Mercy also gives gifts to all the children. It is a good feeling seeing happy faces of the children eating

[delightful] food and unwrapping their gift. Their smiles are so priceless. If only all of you could see the children’s faces – you would really feel the true meaning of Christmas which brings joy, happiness, giving and selfless love.

“Thank you to all who supported the ministry and for making it possible for children to enjoy and feel the love of Jesus.”

Prayer Topics – December 2024 – February 2025



- 1. Mercy Community Churches – 24th Anniversary Celebration!**
On Sunday 17th November, almost 500 people from the squatter communities gathered together to celebrate the 24th anniversary of the Mercy Community Churches! The churches have grown out of the Hands of Mercy Ministry over the years. It was a joyous occasion and thank God for the blessing that the churches have been to the squatter communities.
- 2. Please continue to pray for protection from typhoons and floods.** The rainy season in the Philippines runs from June to November and the Philippines can be hit by as many as 20 typhoons in a year. Some Hands of Mercy team members and beneficiaries have had their goods and food destroyed this year. Please pray for protection and also safety from water-borne diseases.
- 3. Thank God for the Christmas parties!** These are a delight to the children living in the squatter communities. Praise God for the light, hope and joy these bring.
- 4. Pray for the Hands of Mercy team who work so hard in the Philippines.** They also live in poverty and face a struggle to survive every day. Pray that God will sustain, refresh and renew them each day and that they will continue to bear with one another in love (Ephesians 4:2).
- 5. Please pray for the UK Trustees – Sam (Chair), Keith (Treasurer), Denise (Administrator), Sarah, Michael and David.** Pray for God’s wisdom, direction and clarity as they lead the charity and pray in particular for opportunities to share about the work of Hands of Mercy with others whose desire is to alleviate poverty.
- 6. Pray for Sally (Director), Joey (her husband) and all of the leadership team in the Philippines.** Thank God for their diligence and their care and pray that God will be their strength and their wisdom daily. Please also pray for continued health.
- 7. As we enter into 2025, thank God for everything that He has done in Hands of Mercy since we started in 1997.** Thank Jesus for His faithfulness and we look forward expectantly to what He will do in 2025.

Thank you for lifting us up in prayer – whether you do this daily, weekly or monthly!