

Worship for Action for Children Sunday (complete text. A video version is also online)
Keep safe. Keep caring. Keep praying.

Hello! And Welcome to this service, the theme of which is 'Choose Childhood'. Action for Children believes that every child should grow up safe and happy. To make this vision a reality, they offer practical and emotional care and support, make sure children's voices are heard, and campaign to bring lasting improvements to their lives. Doing this lays the foundations for children to thrive. The work Action for Children does is only possible with our support. The Methodist Church has been by the charity's side for more than 150 years. But, tragically, there are still thousands of vulnerable children who desperately need our help. With our worship, prayers and gifts, we can make a real difference to these children. Together we can choose safe and happy childhoods for every child.

This service has been put together by the young people from Kenilworth Methodist Church and they will lead you through as we worship together.

THE PREPARATION

Call to worship

Heavenly Father, as we gather today with thanksgiving and an open heart, help us to hear you. Fill our hearts with love and compassion for those you have sent us to. Stir up our hearts and strengthen our arms to act with justice and righteousness in Jesus' name.

Amen

Hymn: 10, 000 Reasons (Bless the Lord) *Matt Redman*

Bless the Lord, O my soul
O my soul
Worship His holy name
Sing like never before
O my soul
I worship Your holy name

The sun comes up; it's a new day dawning
It's time to sing Your song again

Whatever may pass and whatever lies before me
Let me be singing when the evening comes

Bless the Lord, O my soul
O my soul
Worship His holy name
Sing like never before
O my soul
I worship Your holy name

You're rich in love and You're slow to anger
Your name is great and Your heart is kind
For all Your goodness, I will keep on singing
10,000 reasons for my heart to find

Bless the Lord, O my soul
O my soul
Worship His holy name
Sing like never before
O my soul
I worship Your holy name

And on that day when my strength is failing
The end draws near and my time has come
Still my soul will sing Your praise unending
10,000 years and then forever more

Bless the Lord, O my soul
O my soul
Worship His holy name
Sing like never before
O my soul
I worship Your holy name

Bless the Lord, O my soul
O my soul
Worship His holy name
Sing like never before
O my soul
I worship Your holy name
I worship Your holy name
I worship Your holy name

Sing like never before
O my soul

**I worship Your holy name
I worship Your holy name
I worship Your holy name**

Prayers

Lord, we lift up the work of Action for Children. We think of all the families who come into contact with the charity and pray your blessing over them.

We think of those struggling with their physical or mental health, and pray your peace descends on them.

Lord, remove any barriers that may prevent people from reaching out.

We thank you for the thousands of staff members and volunteers who serve children and families, and pray that you would sustain them.

Give them the energy and enthusiasm they need to lovingly support those most in need.

We thank you for the infrastructure that makes Action for Children's work possible: the buildings, the vehicles, the IT – all the variables that help them to reach and serve communities across the UK.

We pray for the leadership and the trustees – may your wisdom and guidance be present as they map out the future of the charity.

We pray for our wider society – we ask that your will be done; from Westminster all the way down to our communities.

We ask that lives led by love – love modelled so perfectly by Christ – transform the world we live in. In the name of the King, Jesus,
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer

We say the Lord's prayer:

**Our Father in Heaven,
Hallowed be your name,
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done,
On earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil,
For the kingdom, the power and the glory
are yours, now and forever
Amen**

THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD

1st Reading *Jeremiah 22:1-5*

This is what the LORD says: "Go down to the palace of the king of Judah and proclaim this message there:

'Hear the word of the LORD to you, king of Judah, you who sit on David's throne—you, your officials and your people who come through these gates. This is what the LORD says: Do what is just and right. Rescue from the hand of the oppressor the one who has been robbed. Do no wrong or violence to the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place. For if you are careful to carry out these commands, then kings who sit on David's throne will come through the gates of this palace, riding in chariots and on horses, accompanied by their officials and their people. But if you do not obey these commands, declares the LORD, I swear by myself that this palace will become a ruin'.

Gospel *Luke 4: 16-21*

He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

"The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."

Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

Hymn: StF 446 – I will offer up my life

**I will offer up my life in spirit and truth,
Pouring out the oil of love as my worship to
you.**

**In surrender I must give my every part;
Lord receive he sacrifice of a broken heart.**

***Jesus what can I give, what can I bring
to so faithful a friend, to so loving a King?
Saviour, what can be said, what can be sung
As a praise of your name for the things you have
done?***

***O my words could not tell, not even in part
Of the debt of love that is owed by this thankful
heart.***

**You deserve my every breath
For you've paid the great cost:
Giving up your life to death,
Even death on a cross.**

***Jesus what can I give, what can I bring
to so faithful a friend, to so loving a King?
Saviour, what can be said, what can be sung
As a praise of your name for the things you have
done?***

***O my words could not tell, not even in part
Of the debt of love that is owed by this thankful
heart.***

**You take all my shame away,
There defeated my sin,
Opened up the gates of heaven,
And have beckoned me in.**

***Jesus what can I give, what can I bring
to so faithful a friend, to so loving a King?
Saviour, what can be said, what can be sung
As a praise of your name for the things you have
done?***

***O my words could not tell, not even in part
Of the debt of love that is owed by this thankful
heart.***

Talk about Action for Children's work

Lyle's story

Lyle (whose name has been changed to protect his identity) was physically and emotionally abused by his parents. They punched and kicked him, and he'd often go hungry. After turning to alcohol to numb the pain, Lyle ran away from home. Action for Children stepped in to find him a safe and stable place to live.

"Drugs were always a big problem in my family and there was a lot of violence," Lyle explains. "I wasn't fed at home and my big sister would sneak food into her room most nights. But we'd often go days without getting food." Lyle was left to fend for himself after his parents threw his sister out. "I didn't have clean clothes. Mum and dad wouldn't let me bath or shower. I wasn't even allowed to get my hair cut," he says. After getting bullied at school, Lyle started to isolate himself. At 14, he started drinking. "Mum and dad would offer me alcohol all the time, and eventually I said yes. I'd get home from school and they'd give me glasses of things. I'd just drink them. I couldn't feel anything. I thought nothing bad could ever happen when I was drunk."

Lyle left school and found a job he really liked. But things at home got even worse. "I loved my job. But I was the only one putting money in the house. And if I didn't give the money to them for drugs, they'd take it out on me." Lyle's depression and anxiety started to take their toll. "I just knew I had to get out," he says. "I left that house with nothing apart from the clothes on my back. I was in a really bad state. I came to Action for Children with nothing." Action for Children found Lyle a safe place to live in supported accommodation. "They reminded me that I'm enough," he says. "They helped me recover from alcohol. Without them, I don't think I'd be alive."

I nearly took my own life and, if it hadn't been for my support worker coming and just talking to me, I wouldn't be here."

Reflection

Sermon

Good morning Church! I hope you are enjoying the service this morning that has been brought and presented to you by a group of young people that I am delighted to be able to spend Wednesday nights with. This group of young people have been on such an amazing journey over the last couple of years and on this Action for Children Sunday we hope that the message and the passion that we want to share our service with you has been received and been a blessing to you.

I want to talk to us on this Action for Children Sunday, that is all about choosing childhood, about choosing spiritual childhood, and revisiting it. I think that it's important as we look at how we can help children around the world, we also need to help people who are children in their faith. And that is what I want to talk to you a little bit about this morning.

I would like to just examine a couple of examples of children from the bible. The first one is Samuel. Samuel, when he was initially called by God, responded with a very simple phrase which he was taught by Eli to say: 'Speak, Lord, your servant is listening'. And what's important about that, is that it's very childlike in the way it approaches God. It doesn't come with its own agenda or its own list of requests, it just comes wanting to learn. And I encourage people to see God like a child sees their parent. A child who idolises, to an extent, their dad by making him their hero or their mum by making her their heroine and sees the adult as someone to emulate and to follow. And I think that sometimes we come to God in our very busy lives with a list of requests that we'd like him to

do for us and without stopping to learn from him by talking to him as a child would their very learned father. I can very obviously accept that God is much more wise and knowledgeable than me, and therefore his wisdom is something that I would seek to get at every available opportunity.

The second child is the child at the feeding of the five thousand. And again what I love about this is that we spend a lot of time focussing on Jesus and focussing on the miracle, but we don't spend enough time focussing on the child. And this morning I would like to encourage you to look at the child and look at what he does which is that he brings this small basket of bread and fish, and what he does is he presents it to Jesus and says: 'All that I have, I give to you if you can help others by it'. And it's so simple and so childlike but actually it's something that we sometimes miss – that actually if we just bring what we have and ask God to do the rest, it can produce amazing miracles such as the feeding of the five thousand. There's a great song by Keith Green that's called 'He'll take care of the rest' and if you've got time today, have a listen to it and it's humorous in the way that it's put together as a lot of Keith Green's songs were, but it's so powerful in the way it talks about how actually, you just bring what you have and God does the rest and it's not up to you.

So I implore you with these things in mind, not to think of us as having to do church in a certain way. One of the positives that has come out of this very negative situation of the Covid 19 lockdown is that we've been forced into thinking outside of the box and creating new ways of doing church and new ways of doing life, and new ways of living in a relationship with God. It's made us be more forward thinking, the NHS for example has grown about 15 years in 3 weeks at the start of this lockdown because it had to catch up technology-wise with where it needed to be. And its important that we continue to pursue church in a way that allows other people to get

involved and pursue their relationship with God in new and exciting ways.

We've read two readings this morning the first one is about Jesus going to Nazareth and how he wasn't accepted in his own town. And what I find myself struggling with at times as I've read this a couple of times over the last six months, is that I wonder whether young people nowadays, feel accepted in their own church. I think that sometimes we include young people in services in a way that we think feels nice, but I'm wondering how that's perceived by them and whether it's perceived in the way that we think it is. I believe that our role as members of the Christian faith who are more advanced in years is to encourage young people to step out in faith and not to hide their faith or wait until they are older – but that they can step out now. And actually that's borne out all across scripture, that actually you should remember your creator in the days of your youth as Ecclesiastes says, and I think that we have a responsibility to make church more friendly to people who are trying to reason and think through and work out with fear and trembling sometimes, as the bible says, their faith in God. I believe that we need to put a focus on this going forward and that actually we can treat the current lockdown as a wake-up call that not everybody sees things the way that we do. This is borne out by further in our other reading where we are called to be a porthole for the foreigner, and the fatherless and the widow and we do a great job of trying to be there for all of those people in a literal sense, but I wonder about people who are a foreigner to our faith. If you walked into your church never having experienced a relationship with God before, or never having experienced a relationship with God through Jesus before sometimes, whether it would feel alien and whether it would feel like you could engage.

So maybe those are things to think about. Maybe we should focus as we come out of this

lockdown, on choosing spiritual childhood on choosing to revisit when our relationship with God was simply trying to discover more about him and trying to emulate him and trying to be more like him.

I think it's important that we work on not rejecting people by rejecting new ideas. I think that it's important that we focus on a church that celebrates what God has done while choosing childhood and purposing our hearts and our minds and our vision on what he is yet to do, cos I believe that now is the time for us to step out in faith and step out together to see God the Father bring more people into his family.

I hope you've been blessed by this Action for Children Sunday. I hope you are encouraged and don't feel offended by what I have said this morning. It is born out of a place of such passion; I find it such a blessed thing to be involved with – helping young people to develop in Christian faith. But also it's important that we include young people as much as we can, because I can tell you as a youth leader, I have learnt a load off them – probably as much as they have learnt off me in the last year and a half. And we need to be a church that promotes young people stepping out within it, and getting practice in stepping out in their faith.

I hope you've been blessed, I hope you've been challenged; and I hope that we can see each other very, very soon. Thank you, bless you,

Hymn: StF 409 – Let us build a house where love can dwell

- 1. Let us build a house where love can dwell
and all can safely live,
a place where saints and children tell
how hearts learn to forgive.
Built of hopes and dreams and visions,
rock of faith and vault of grace;
here the love of Christ shall end divisions:**

*All are welcome,
all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.*

2. Let us build a house where prophets speak,
and words are strong and true,
where all God's children dare to seek
to dream God's reign anew.
Here the cross shall stand as witness
and as symbol of God's grace;
here as one we claim the faith of Jesus:

*All are welcome,
all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.*

3. Let us build a house where love is found
in water, wine and wheat:
a banquet hall on holy ground
where peace and justice meet.
Here the love of God, through Jesus,
is revealed in time and space;
as we share in Christ the feast that frees us:

*All are welcome,
all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.*

4. Let us build a house where hands will reach
beyond the wood and stone
to heal and strengthen, serve and teach,
and live the Word they've known.
Here the outcast and the stranger
bear the image of God's face;
let us bring an end to fear and danger:

*All are welcome,
all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.*

5. Let us build a house where all are named,
their songs and visions heard
and love and treasured, taught and claimed
as words within the Word.
Built of tears and cries and laughter,
prayers of faith and songs of grace,
let this house proclaim from floor to rafter:

*All are welcome,
all are welcome,
all are welcome in this place.*

THE RESPONSE

Prayer

Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus, we ask that you bring healing to any child or young person who has been the victim of abuse or neglect.

They are your children and have been called into your wonderful light.

Show them that you see them and know what they are going through.

Show them that you are right beside them.

No matter how terrible the situation, we pray that they will know that they can lean on you.

Open our eyes, Lord, to see any potential signs of abuse and remove every form of ignorance from us.

Give these children and young people hope and provide healing in their body, soul and mind.

Ease their suffering, Father, and cause a complete restoration in their lives.

Amen.

Prayer of committal.

(The congregation says the words in bold)

In celebration of over 150 years of work and witness, we commit ourselves afresh:

Where children cry in need:

We will hear their cry.

Where children are denied the gifts of childhood:

We will provide for them to delight in good things.

Where there is exclusion or deprivation:

We will challenge injustice.

Where poverty is rife:

We will share what we have.

Where others also care:

We will work with them.

Wherever we see a need:

We will pray for means to meet it.

Let us pray:

Loving God, you have called us to be your people and to share in the ministry of your Son. Grant us, we pray,
ears that are open to the cries of those in need,
hearts that are eager to respond,
voices that are ready to speak out for the oppressed,
and hands that are active in sharing your bounty.
In the name of Christ our Lord.
Amen.

THE DISMISSAL

Hymn: My lighthouse – Rend Collective

**In my wrestling and in my doubts
In my failures You won't walk out
Your great love will lead me through
You are the peace in my troubled sea
You are the peace in my troubled sea**

**In the silence, You won't let go
In the questions, Your truth will hold
Your great love will lead me through
You are the peace in my troubled sea
You are the peace in my troubled sea**

**My lighthouse, my lighthouse
Shining in the darkness. I will follow You
My lighthouse, my lighthouse
I will trust the promise
You will carry me safe to shore (oh-oh-oh-oh-oh)
Safe to shore (oh-oh-oh-oh-oh)
Safe to shore (oh-oh-oh-oh-oh)
Safe to shore**

**I won't fear what tomorrow brings
With each morning I'll rise and sing
My God's love will lead me through
You are the peace in my troubled sea
You are the peace in my troubled sea
(You are my light)**

**My lighthouse, my lighthouse
Shining in the darkness, I will follow You
My lighthouse, my lighthouse
I will trust the promise**

You will carry me safe to shore (oh-oh-oh-oh-oh)

Safe to shore (oh-oh-oh-oh-oh)

Safe to shore (oh-oh-oh-oh-oh)

Safe to shore

**Fire before us, You're the brightest
You will lead us through the storms
Fire before us, You're the brightest
You will lead us through the storms
Fire before us, You're the brightest
You will lead us through the storms
Fire before us, You're the brightest
You will lead us through the storms**

**My lighthouse, my lighthouse
Shining in the darkness, I will follow You
My lighthouse, my lighthouse
I will trust the promise
You will carry me safe to shore (oh-oh-oh-oh-oh)
Safe to shore (oh-oh-oh-oh-oh)
Safe to shore (oh-oh-oh-oh-oh)
Safe to shore**

Songwriters: Gareth Gilkeson, Chris Llewellyn
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Prayer & blessing

The love of God be the passion
in your heart.

The joy of God your strength
when times are hard .

The presence of God a peace
that overflows.

The Word of God the seed
that you might sow.

Amen