

11th July 2021 – Morning Service

Action for children Sunday

Jill Martin

Call to Worship¹

Let your word be in our mouth, O Lord, your truth in our heart and your will in our mind. Let us think only what is good and discern your presence in all that we do. Let us at all times be alive to the promptings of your Holy Spirit; through Christ our Lord. **Amen**

StF 687 - One human family God has made

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| 1) One human family God has made, And all for each to care. One world, to be the home of all, With all its wealth to share. One Christ, to manifest on earth Love's ultimate design. One Church to know the mystery Of broken bread and wine. | 3) And are we brave enough to join With that great company - The cost not less than all we have And are or hope to be - The bitter cup of human sin To drink with him who died, And take his love outside the wall To all the crucified? |
| 2) One race, one world - yet torn apart, We spurn the way of love. But still ahead, the Christ leads on And calls his Church to move From love of power to power of love, To give the word to all - To trust the love that conquered death, Outside the city wall. | 4) Claim him who claims us for his own, To share his pain and grief, To bear the scars that stamp us his - The hallmark of belief. As partners of the living Christ, Who risk the path he trod, With wondering love we find we share The timeless joy of God. |

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Prayer²

Loving God, we give you thanks and praise for your abundant mercy and Grace that we receive. Lord Jesus, we ask you to give us peace in our mind, body, soul and spirit. Help us to bring healing to this broken world, bringing peace and hope to families and children in these uncertain times through the work of Action for Children. Give those who work for the charity the wisdom to make the right choices for those they help. Bring peace to those who are overwhelmed by circumstances that are sometimes beyond their control. You are the Prince of Peace and we can put our trust in you. In the name of Jesus, we pray. **Amen²**

Reading: John 14: 15-28 The gift of God's peace

"If you love me, keep my commands. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another advocate to help you and be with you forever— the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them."

Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, "But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?" Jesus replied, "Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me."

“All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.” “You heard me say, ‘I am going away and I am coming back to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I.

Action for Children – background

Thomas Bowman Stephenson is the founder of The Children’s Home, now Action for Children - which has grown from its 1st home at 8 Church Street to run 650 projects and work with over 250,000 children, young people, parents and carers all over the UK. Stephenson was a Methodist Minister, as was his father. He was the sixth child born in 1839. He travelled around due to his father’s vocation, and trained for ministry himself at Richmond College, graduating from London University. He served at Norwich, Manchester and Bolton before moving to Lambeth in 1868.

When he arrived in London he was shocked and moved by the children living on the streets, as a Minister he visited many. “There they were” he said, “ragged, shoeless, filthy, their faces pinched with hunger and premature wretchedness, and I began to feel that now my time was come. Here were my poor little brothers and sisters, sold to hunger and the devil, and I could not be free of their blood if I did not do something to to save some of them”.

With Methodist friends, he came up with the idea of a home for young boys, where they would be safe from poverty and crime. Stephenson, Maher and Horner moved quickly and within three months of meeting, the first two boys were admitted to The Children’s Home on 9th July 1869. They bought 8, Church Street, a disused stable for the first home. Lay Wesleyan Methodists, John Chubb, Sir Francis Lycett and Sir William McArthur also provided support.

Stephenson was determined that he wanted to create a home, not another work house and Mr and Mrs Austin were appointed run the home and be called Father and Mother. By January 1871 the neighbouring house had also been taken over with 29 boys living there. George Oliver, the first child to live there signed himself G Oliver No 1 for the rest of his life.

Stephenson’s exacting views on child care also found expression in the creation of the Sisterhood of the Children in 1878. He had been influenced by the approach to child care in Hamburg, Germany, with children in small groups, but was concerned by the lack of a female presence. The Sisterhood remained an important part of The Home and continued up to 1985.

Stephenson also founded the Wesley Deaconess Order, wrote hymns and played a leading part in editing the Wesleyan Hymn Book of 1878 and one of the earliest supporters of British Methodism. He resigned as Principal of The Children’s Home in 1900 and became Superintendent Minister at Ilkley. He retired in 1907 and died in 1912. By then over 2,000 children were cared for by what had become the National Children’s Home and Orphanage.

StF 409 - Let us build a house

- 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:
- 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:
- 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:
- 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:
- 5) Let us a build a house where all are named,
Their songs and visions heard
And loved 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:

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Biblical teachings about children (from The Message)

Children are gifts from God to families - Psalm 127: 3

Don't you see that children are God's best gift? The fruit of the womb his generous gift.

Children need discipline - Proverbs 29: 17

Discipline your children; you'll be glad you did - they'll turn out delightful to live with

Orphans, displaced and refugee children and children living in poverty need special care - Zechariah 7: 10

Treat one another justly. Love your neighbours. Be compassionate with each other. Don't take advantage of widows, orphans, visitors, and the poor. Don't plot and scheme against one another - that's evil

Children are blessed by God - Mark 10: 16

The people brought children to Jesus, hoping he might touch them. The disciples shooed them off. But Jesus was irate and let them know it: "Don't ever get between them and me. These children are the very centre of life in the kingdom"

In their most recent survey, Action for Children found that many families were already under significant financial pressure before the Pandemic and now their situation is deteriorating. Others who were just about managing and coping are facing financial hardship for the first time. As a result of these pressures many families have struggled to afford the resources to feed their children, educate them at home and keep them entertained. Some have also had to cope with adult and child mental health concerns.

Their recommendations to this Government are:

- Retain increases in the Universal Credit standard allowance; local housing rates; and England only Council Tax Support
- Increase Child Benefit by £10 per week
- Increase the child element of Universal Credit and Child Tax Credit by £20 per week
- End the benefit cap and two child limit
- Increase funding to welfare assistance
- In the long term they are asking the Government to implement a UK child strategy that sets ambitious targets for its reduction and eradication
- Establish an independent body to provide advice on the adequacy of welfare benefit levels.

Action for Children Covenant

Every child has the right to live, to be safe and to be loved. Every young person has the right to be housed, to have enough money to live in dignity and to have enough support for the future. Every young person has the right to justice, to realise their potential, and to be given the space to become independent. In an often cruel and imperfect world, we uphold the work of Action for Children with children and young people in danger, in need and at risk. We support the growth of this work and the pursuit of all these rights for the young, the discounted and the vulnerable. We make this covenant with Action for Children for the sake of all God's children. **Amen**

StF 702 – I will speak out

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| 1) I will speak out for those who have no voices; I will stand up for the rights of all the oppressed; I will speak truth and justice; I'll defend the poor and the needy; I will lift up the weak in Jesus' name. | 2) I will speak out for those who have no choices; I will cry out for those who live without love; I will show God's compassion To the crushed and broken in spirit; I will lift up the weak in Jesus' name. |
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Dave Bankhead, Ray Goudie, Sue Rinaldi & Steve Bassett © 1990 Authentic Publishing CCL No. 515642

Prayer³

Ever-present God, we thank you that you are active in our world, declaring your love for all people through the work of Action for Children. We earnestly hold before you today all those children and families who need to be supported - those surrounded by the horrors of abuse, neglect, violence, poverty, exploitation and other peace shattering circumstances.

Every child and family member is precious to you and we humbly ask that the work of the charity to continue to make a real difference in their lives. May they be blessed with all the things that will allow them to live and flourish as you intended, secure in the knowledge that they are loved and treasured. We also hold before you the leaders, staff, volunteers and supporters of Action for Children. May everyone of them continue to recognise the promptings of your Spirit as You guide them along the right path to provide the live giving support that is needed.

To struggle against the challenging circumstances of our time can be frightening, heart-breaking and energy sapping, physically, emotionally and mentally, not only for the children and families in need but also for those people in Action for Children who come into contact with them. We pray fervently that all involved may be instilled with your strength and peace.

Lord of Peace, give them peace at all times and in every way, and may they know the hope that is possible through following Jesus. **Amen**

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come;
thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power, and the
glory for ever and ever. **Amen.**

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 us 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 for ever. **Amen.**

StF 707 – Make me a channel of your peace

- 1) Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me bring your love;
Where there is injury, your pardon, Lord;
And where there's doubt, true faith in you:
- 2) Make me a channel of your peace.
Where there's despair in life, let me bring hope;
Where there is darkness, only light;
And where there's sadness, ever joy:
- Ch) *O Master, grant that I may never seek
So much to be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved, as to love with all my soul.*
- 3) Make me a channel of your peace.
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
In giving unto all that we receive,
And in dying that we're born to eternal life.

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Blessing

May the love of the Lord rest upon your soul. May his love dwell in you throughout every day.
May his countenance shine upon you and be gracious to you. May his Spirit be upon you as you leave this
place. The blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirits be with us all evermore. **Amen**

¹ Jakob Bohem (1575-1624) taken from *Methodist Prayer Handbook*

² Prayer by Elizabeth Bishop, *Action for Children District Advocate for Yorkshire West District*

³ Prayer by Steve Oliver, *Action for Children District Advocate for Manchester and Stockport District*