



Seeds of hope

Worship resources celebrating the work of Action for Children



Action for Children is committed to helping the most vulnerable and neglected children and young people in the UK break through injustice, deprivation and inequality, so they can achieve their full potential.

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as long as it takes

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Seeds of hope

Action for Children Sunday is designated by the Methodist Church as one of its 'Special Sundays' – a time to reflect on and celebrate the work of its children's charity, Action for Children. It is usually celebrated on the second Sunday in July, as this is closest to the anniversary of our founding on 9 July 1869, but Action for

Children Sunday may be celebrated at any convenient time.

This year, we invite you to use the lectionary readings for the second Sunday in July and to join us in celebrating 100 years of Action for Children's work in Wales.

As well as the resources provided here, you will find more on our website at www.actionforchildren.org.uk

We welcome invitations for one of our staff or volunteers to speak briefly about our work during worship at your church. We would be pleased to arrange this through your local fundraiser or you can contact our customer support team on **0300 123 2112** from 9am–5pm Monday to Friday. To give us time to meet your request, please contact us by the beginning of June.

Please remember when inviting a speaker that they are not trained as worship leaders and will only expect to speak briefly about Action for Children, leaving the conduct of worship to the appointed leader.

Thank you for your continuing support in prayer and action.

Will Morrey
Action for Children Faith Communities Adviser

The quickest and easiest way to make a difference

My Action for Children is our fantastic new fundraising website. It's a completely new way to give, and with **My Action for Children**, making a difference to the most vulnerable and neglected children has never been easier.

In just three simple steps you can help to transform life for children anywhere in the UK. Where you give, and how you help, is entirely up to you.

Please make a donation at

my.actionforchildren.org.uk

The quickest and easiest way to support this project and children and young people in your area



What's your action for children?

In 2009, we launched our '**Take your action for children**' neglect appeal – a three-year campaign to raise awareness of child neglect, and £17 million to directly tackle it, with early intervention.

Neglect is the persistent failure to provide the right care and attention to a child's physical or emotional needs, from love and support to food and clothing. Studies suggest up to 10 per cent of children in the UK experience neglect – that's almost 1.5 million.

We've already done lots to tackle child neglect so far, but there's still much more to do. Find out how you can help at:

www.actionforchildren.org.uk

'It's changed everything,' says a beaming Kelvyn, two years later. 'Before, there was no one around to say "do this, don't do that" – so I didn't know what to do. That makes it hard to achieve things.'

Things didn't change overnight of course, and Kelvyn and Lisa are now able to laugh, for example, about the time he protested at being asked to go on a weekend away by getting very drunk and angry. 'He was just testing us, I think,' says Lisa with the cheerful confidence of someone who's seen it all before. Kelvyn picks up the story: 'Peter said, "If you want to be a drunk all your life, carry on – but if you want to make something of yourself, then you'll come away." Peter is straight-talking; if he says "no" you know it's for a reason. Now, I always go to him for advice.'

On top of the stability and boundaries Lisa and Peter have introduced, Kelvyn appreciates their encouragement: they helped him to pass his driving test, to sail through his GCSEs – and there's Peter's rugby expertise. He has had the support of girlfriend Lucy, too.

With this help, Kelvyn has been able to build bridges with his own family again, making peace with his father, who had cancer, before he passed away, and maintaining his relationship with his mother.

It takes someone special to take on the care of a child, and to understand their needs. Action for Children prides itself on the quality of the foster carers it recruits, and Lisa says the support she's had from the charity has been invaluable.

For now, Kelvyn is explaining proudly that he's just been accepted onto a respected course at a rugby academy. 'Yes,' says Lisa proudly, 'Kelvyn's going to be in the next national squad – and when he is, I'm having the first ticket!'

'Now my future looks exciting'



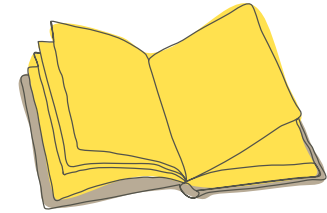
Bible readings

Genesis 25: 19–24

Vital life and painful struggle

Matthew 13: 1–9, 18–23

The parable of the Sower



Commentary

Rebekah knows the joy of the new baby she is carrying, but her happiness is overshadowed by worry, as even before the birth, she knows the struggle that will face her very different sons, Jacob and Essau. Contrast the hunter and the farmer, the pioneer and the settler; throughout civilisations difference has presented a great challenge, and we all struggle sometimes to understand those different from us.

The parable of the Sower, read as an allegory, with different ground representing different sorts of people and their varied responses, shows the challenge of difference in the responses of the various 'types' of people. There may be insights for us in going down that path, but there's another potential route for our thinking.

Suppose the parable was told, as others were, with the punchline at the end and in order to cause a change of mind and heart in the listener. The standard practice was, unlike our gardening, to sow seed by scattering over the whole area and then ploughing the seed in as the ground, whatever its state, was turned over. What might we then see in the discovery of a harvest, 30, 60, hundredfold from a very unlikely field? Two things – the challenge to go and sow seeds; and secondly, hope and faith in a harvest being brought about.

Action for Children's history has been about sowing seeds of hope for the most vulnerable and neglected children and young people and their families. Today, in increasingly difficult times in the UK, when signs of neglect are increasing, Action for Children is committed to supporting those who need it most.

Church and charity can share not only that commitment to keep sowing but also a profound belief that harvest can and will be reaped. Action for Children shares such stories in various publications and on their website. In them, you can sense the hope that springs from some unlikely places.

So will we commit to a partnership sowing seeds of hope?

The challenge of such a commitment is expressed by Kathy Galloway in her poem, *The sower and the seed* ('Talking to the bones'), which finishes with these lines:

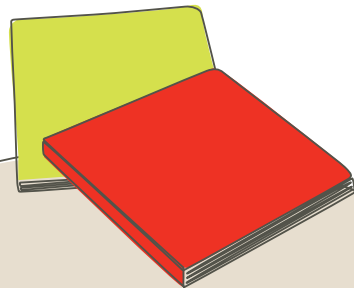
I look at my own hand. It is closed, still clutching for what is gone. But I cannot scatter seed with a clenched fist. I open my hand. I let go of all that I have been holding that needs to die. It hurts to let it go. But it is the hurt of life. Now I can sow new seed.

My seeds are small. But they have great potential. I don't know where they will take root.

So I want to sow well, with care, seeds of friendship and respect, and value for people.

Seeds of justice and love, seeds of reverence and encouragement. I want to sow seeds of peace.

I can only sow. For the rest, I trust, and I let go...



Kelvyn's story

Meeting 17-year-old Kelvyn now, it's hard to imagine him angrily rugby-tackling a female school teacher to the floor. 'She'd taken our ball and my friend asked me to get it back,' he explains. 'That's how I was back then. I didn't have any goals, so the consequences didn't matter.'

The teacher in question must have been terrified; Kelvyn's a big lad, and he dreams of playing rugby professionally. But if he had carried on as he was, he would never have had the chance to do so.

Kelvyn wasn't doing well at school either. 'I was on my last chance at school,' he says, 'I knew that, but I didn't understand why.'

To a couple with four lively children at home already, the thought of taking on a teenager like Kelvyn could have been daunting. Fortunately for Kelvyn, Lisa and Peter – a pair of experienced foster carers vetted and trained by the Action for Children Fostering Taith Newydd project – did understand why

things were going wrong. And they had the skills and patience to help Kelvyn to see it, too. Things came to a head when Kelvyn ran away from difficulties at home; because he was a friend of their son, Nathan, and Peter, a rugby coach, had trained him, he wound up with Lisa and Peter. It was agreed that it would be best for Kelvyn not to return to his family and, after assessment by Rhondda-Cynon-Taff, Action for Children's partner local authority, Lisa and Peter were allowed to offer Kelvyn a home. As well as training to help prepare them for the challenges and rewards of fostering, the couple have appreciated the charity's ongoing support, including development sessions and access to a 24-hour advice helpline.



During our centenary celebrations in Wales, we are hearing many remarkable stories about Action for Children's work over the years. Here, Alex and Kelvyn share their stories.

Alex's story

Hello, my name is Alex and I am 11 years old. I live with mum and my younger brother. My brother and I have been young carers for nearly two years because my mum has severe ME which means she feels ill all the time and has to spend a lot of her time resting or in bed. My brother has ADHD, which means I also have to help look after him some of the time.

My little brother and I don't mind helping our mum but it is not always easy. When she is really ill we find it hard to stop worrying. The types of things we do are things such as washing up, cleaning, helping with the laundry, and helping mum get out of bed and move around. We also help to fetch her medication and know who to ring if things go wrong. This year I really want to learn to cook.

Sometimes we push mum around in her wheelchair although we can't go out much. My mum says we need to take our wheelchair

driving test as we are not exactly experts at going in the right direction and everything takes twice as long, but we usually end up laughing about it!

The Vale young carers' project has organised trips out for us which we really enjoy as we can let our hair down and make as much noise as we want! (We have to be really quiet around Mum.) It has been great meeting the other kids who are also carers, and the adults are pretty cool too! We have spent some time at the CHICKS respite centre in Devon, which we really look forward to as it is the only holiday we have.

My mum has other carers who help too, although she still does most things herself when she can. Although things can be tough at times, Mum does help us loads too especially organising things and with our school work. With all of us doing our bit to help, we are a very happy little family!

Some suggested hymns from *Hymns & Psalms*



220 (God is love, his the care); 326 (There's a spirit in the air)

548 (Give to me Lord a thankful heart); 552 (Lord of all hopefulness)

807 (What shall we offer our good Lord)



A prayer of confession

Gracious God,

You have never ceased loving us. Throughout our lives you want us to keep discovering that this world is your world and your way is the way of self giving love.

Forgive us that we often give up on our commitments, grow tired of the long road and want instant solutions.

Forgive us that increasing numbers of children and young people suffer neglect.

Humble us and by your spirit renew our commitment to unconditional giving and practical caring through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen



An offering prayer

Let us pray,

O God, in Jesus you taught the way of giving generously and receiving gladly. As we present these gifts of money enable us to live with open minds and hearts that we may give generously from the bounty of all we have received.

Enable Action for Children to use these gifts with flare, imagination and vision that by our partnership together we may bring hope to children, young people and families in Britain and beyond.

Amen





A prayer for Action for Children Sunday

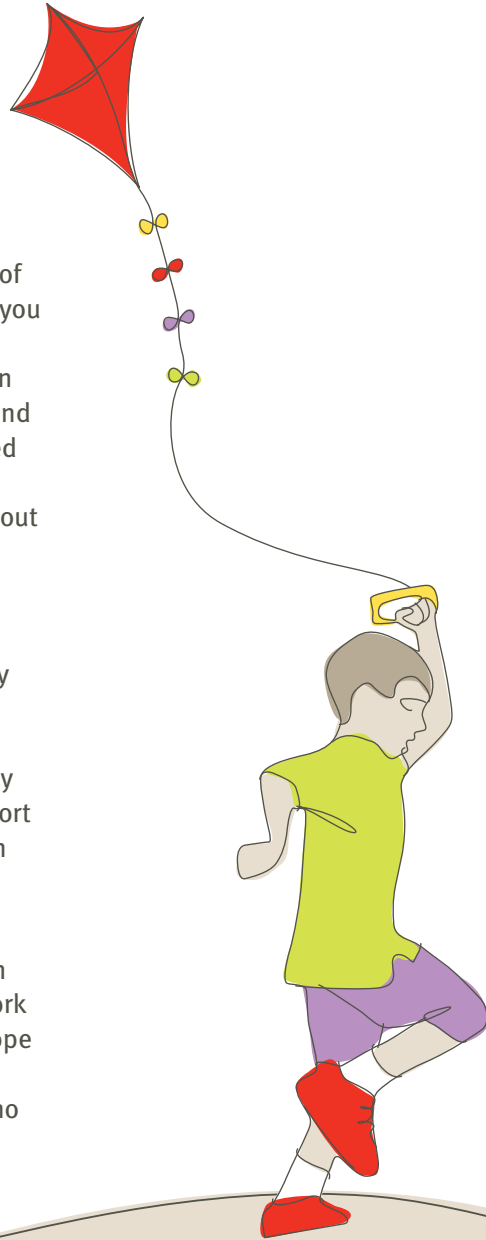
Gracious God,

We thank you for men and women of vision who inspired Methodists in the nineteenth century to address the needs of neglected children. We thank you for a century of work in Wales and all that Action for Children has achieved as its services and care have evolved and reached countless children and young people in Britain and throughout the world.

The increasing number of children and young people in Britain suffering neglect today angers and distresses us. Save us from blaming others and excusing ourselves and by your spirit quicken us to support the work of Action for Children afresh.

Inspire the work of Action for Children that, with partners in Britain and beyond, it may work with integrity, passion and hope to meet the needs of children, young people and families who need their care and support most, for as long as it takes.

Amen



Prayers of intercession

Loving God, you do not create us to live alone and you have not made us all alike.

We thank you for the varied society of humankind, into which we come, by which we are brought up, and through which we discover the purpose of our lives.

In gratitude we pray for others and for the work of Action for Children.

We pray for families under stress, for tense and fractured relationships, for parents exhausted and isolated wondering where to turn, and for children angry and afraid.

We pray for Action for Children's crisis intervention work, its family projects, mediation, family support and children's centres.

(Silence)

**Through our lives and by our prayers
Your kingdom come**

We pray for children and young people in care, for all they have been through and continue to bear, for trust and stability and hope for the future.

We pray for Action for Children's schools, residential care, respite care, foster care and adoption services.

(Silence)

**Through our lives and by our prayers
Your kingdom come**

We pray for the vulnerable in our society, and victims of abuse.

We pray for Action for Children's work with the victims of sexual abuse, its youth justice work, youth support and children's rights advocacy work.

(Silence)

**Through our lives and by our prayers
Your kingdom come**

We pray for the needs of children throughout the world.

We pray for Action for Children's international work through its partnerships with the Methodist churches in southern Africa, Zimbabwe and Belize.

(Silence)

**Through our lives and by our prayers
Your kingdom come**

We say together *The Lord's Prayer*