

When I needed a neighbour...

**Worship resources celebrating
the work of Action for Children**



as long as it takes



When I needed a neighbour...

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 focus also on our **neglect appeal**.

As well as the resources provided here, you will find additional ones on our website: 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. This can be arranged through your local fundraiser or you can call our Supporter Care team on 0300 123 2112 (9am–5pm Monday to Friday).

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.

Will Morrey
Faith Communities Adviser

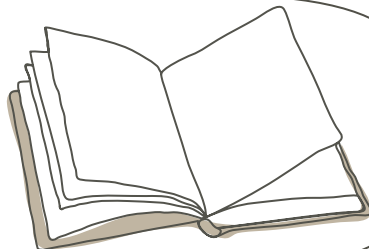
Bible readings

Amos 7 verses 7–17

The prophet holds a plumb line to the people of Israel

Luke 10 verses 25–37

The parable of the Good Samaritan



Commentary

On Action for Children Sunday, we invite you to reflect on the messages in the bible stories alongside some facts about the increasing numbers of children and young people who are suffering neglect in the UK today (see our neglect appeal notes below).

One of Sydney Carter’s best known songs, ‘When I needed a neighbour’, begins:

**‘When I needed a neighbour were you there, were you there?
When I needed a neighbour were you there?
And the creed and the colour and the name won’t matter,
were you there?’**

With each succeeding verse we are challenged, ‘were you there?’

When the question ‘Who is my neighbour?’ is put to Jesus, he doesn’t answer directly but rather tells a story in which a badly beaten man is left to his fate. Three people see him but only one addresses the victim’s need. Interestingly, if the priest and Levite had asked the question ‘Who is my neighbour?’, they would have obeyed the requirements of their law and stopped to help a fellow countryman. By contrast, had the Samaritan asked ‘Who is my neighbour?’, he would have been under no such obligation to help. By means of the story, Jesus is giving a two-fold reply.

Firstly, the story is saying that the question ‘Who is my neighbour?’ shouldn’t be asked. It is an unprofitable question that inappropriately and unhelpfully limits compassion and care to only those who meet a definition of being ‘my neighbour’. Secondly, the parable of the Good Samaritan speaks powerfully about being a neighbour to those in need.

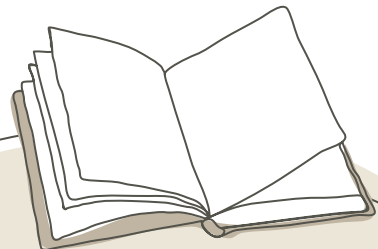
The parable thus challenges us to look at our own approach to life and our involvement with people to see if we ask unprofitable questions that stifle compassion. It also challenges us to go and **be a neighbour** to those in need.

The prophet Amos’s use of the plumb line to measure the uprightness of the people of Israel is a powerful image too. A plumb line is a cord with a weight attached to one end – when held up, the weight automatically causes the cord to hang vertically. Using a plumb line enables us to build walls that are truly straight. Like all the prophets, he constantly reminds people of the importance of ordering society in an upright way, a way that cares for the most vulnerable.

What might Amos say if he were to hold a plumb line up to today’s society?

‘The true measure of a nation’s standing is how well it attends to its children – their health and safety, their material security, their education and socialisation, and their sense of being loved, valued, and included in the families and societies into which they are born.’ (Unicef, 2007)

From our experience and research, we know that neglect of children and young people crosses all social boundaries and can be found in all of our communities. A knee-jerk reaction is to look for people to blame, to see it as the fault of certain people or groups. We urge you to see the growth of child neglect as an issue for us all and to join us in **being a neighbour** to those who need us most.





Action for Children's neglect appeal

The scale of the problem

Serious neglect kills. Yet no one knows exactly how many children in the UK are neglected. Studies show that up to 10% of children experience neglect, and we know that of all the cases where a child has been identified as being at risk, almost half (48%) are due to neglect – but the vast majority of children who experience neglect go unreported and are not helped.

What is meant by neglect?

Neglect is the persistent failure to meet a child's basic needs and it's likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. It can be harder to recognise than other forms of child abuse because it is often a symptom of other long-term and complex problems in a family rather than an easily recognisable one-off event. Neglect comes in many guises. Some of the following, observed on a regular basis over a period of time, may be indicators:

- ▶ a child who frequently goes hungry
- ▶ a child who regularly goes to school in dirty clothes
- ▶ a child who is not taken to the doctors when ill
- ▶ a child who is frequently left unsupervised and lives in a dirty home



What is Action for Children doing?

We're aiming to raise **£17m** over the next three years. We want to:

- ▶ develop new, **mobile services** to reach out to children who don't use the services we already have
- ▶ develop a programme to involve **fathers** more in mainstream services
- ▶ develop a programme to tackle **poor nutrition** in all our family support services
- ▶ develop **UK-wide programmes** to tackle other specific aspects of neglect and to enhance the skills of our **family support workers**
- ▶ encourage governments to invest in a policy of early intervention

For more information, go to our website www.actionforchildren.org.uk

Studies suggest up to 10% of children experience neglect



Some suggested hymns from *Hymns & Psalms*



145 'Jesu, Jesu, fill us with
your love'
220 'God is love, his the care'
402 'For the healing of
the nations'
795 'Jesus, I fain would find'

'When I needed a neighbour'
(copyright Stainer & Bell) may
be found at the Stainer & Bell
website: www.stainer.co.uk



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, tire 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,

Generous God, your
compassionate bias to the poor
and needy challenges us to be
open handed in all we give.

Receive these gifts of money
that they may be used with
imagination by Action for
Children in their work with
children, young people and
families who need them most.

Amen





A prayer for Action for Children Sunday

(also printed on prayer card)

Gracious God,

Your unconditional love wins from us a response that sends us out to love and care for those around us.

We thank you for men and women of vision who inspired Methodists in the 19th century to address the needs of neglected children. We thank you for all that Action for Children has achieved over the years as its services and care have evolved and reached millions of children and young people throughout the world.

Discovering that increasing numbers of children and young people throughout the UK suffer neglect today alarms us. Save us from closing our eyes to local need, from blaming others and excusing ourselves. By your spirit, quicken us to take action.

Inspire the work of Action for Children that, with partners in the UK and beyond, it may work with integrity, passion and hope to meet the needs of the 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 families 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, and youth support and children's rights advocacy work.

(Silence)



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

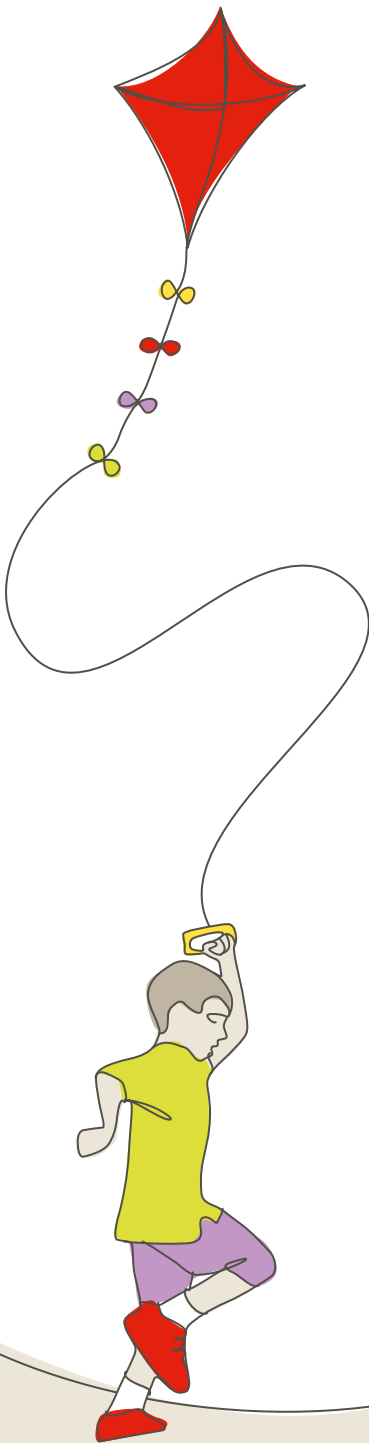
We pray for the needs of children throughout the world.

We pray for Action for Children's international work, especially its partnerships with the Methodist churches in Southern Africa, Zimbabwe and the Caribbean.

(Silence)

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

We say 'The Lord's Prayer' together



Meet Emily

Emily's story, told in her own words, features in Action for Children's latest TV ad. Emily was neglected from a very young age.



She says:

'The house was filthy. We was filthy. There was wallpaper peeling off the walls. The same bedding on the bed for months.'

'We were lucky if we got a bath once a fortnight. We had nothing to eat.'

'It's the emotional neglect that affects you more.'

'Action for Children has never given up on me. They're amazing – like a family.'

'They've believed in me and they've helped me achieve my potential.'



Although there were no quick fixes, with our help Emily managed to overcome her experiences and begin to feel wanted and loved.

No child should be neglected. Help us to help more children like Emily – take **your** action for children at www.actionforchildren.org.uk



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

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