



Highcliffe and Bransgore **Methodist Churches**

Sunday 12th July 2020, 10:30am, Action for Children Sunday

Prepared by Mrs Christine Stuckey with contribution from Winifred George and Rev'd Phillip Dixon

Today is Action for Children Sunday and we shall be thinking about this organisation in our prayers. 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, making sure children's voices are heard, and campaigning to bring lasting improvements to their lives. Our Bible readings today reflect the need for justice and freedom from oppression for all.



Opening Prayer:

Heavenly Father, as we join with others this morning, help us to remember that you are with us by the presence of your Holy Spirit. Open our hearts to receive your love; help us to hear you speaking to us. Fill our hearts with compassion for those in need and strengthen us to act with justice and righteousness in Jesus' name. **Amen**

Proclamation:

God, wake us up!

God of new creation, wake us with a burst of light to lead us with joy into this new day.

God of the unexpected, when we are indifferent to the needs around us: wake us with a burst of light to lead us into this new day.

God of judgement, when we hide from the truth and shut out the pain of reality: wake us with a burst of light to lead us with joy into this new day.

God of all life, wake us up!

Recreate us, surprise us, challenge us that we may be ready to greet your light and walk with joy throughout the day.

Hymn: StF 134 Christ, whose glory fills the skies Sing/read /pray/proclaim the words.

Christ, whose glory fills the skies,
Christ, the true, the only Light,
Sun of Righteousness, arise,
triumph o'er the shades of night;
Dayspring from on high, be near;
Daystar, in my heart appear.

Dark and cheerless is the morn
unaccompanied by thee;
joyless is the day's return
'til thy mercy's beams I see;
'til they inward light impart,
glad my eyes, and warm my heart.

Visit, then, this soul of mine;
pierce the gloom of sin and grief;
fill me, Radiancy divine;

scatter all my unbelief;
more and more thyself display,
shining to the perfect day.

Charles Wesley (1707-1788)

Prayer of confession:

Almighty God, we come to make confession, for we have sinned in thought and word and deed. We now repent in honesty and sorrow; forgive us Lord and meet us in our need. (StF 419 v.1)

Loving God, you have shown the way of life for us in your beloved Son; we confess our slowness to learn of him; our failure to follow him; our reluctance to bear the cross.

In your mercy Lord, forgive us.

We confess that we have not acted in love and goodness towards others; that there are things which cause us shame and regret; broken relationships we have not attempted to repair; lost opportunities when we should have spoken for you but we have been silent and doubted the power of your Spirit to sustain us.

In your mercy Lord, forgive us.

We confess that we forget to look to you in hope and expectancy for new life and inspiration and we so easily lose the sense of the wonder and power of the Gospel.

In your mercy Lord, forgive us.

Gracious God, reform our will, reinforce our courage, and create in us a new heart. Help us to know and to rejoice in your forgiveness. Open our hearts to new beginnings and help us to live in the light of your love and the power of the Holy Spirit. Through Jesus Christ our Lord,
Amen.

Hymn: StF 395 Spirit of the living God

Sing/read /pray/proclaim the words.

Spirit of the Living God,
Fall afresh on me.

Spirit of the Living God,
Fall afresh on me.

Melt me, mould me,
Fill me, use me,

Spirit of the Living God,
Fall afresh on me.

Repeat

Daniel Iverson (1890-1977)

Preparation for the reading and preaching of scripture:

Lord, prepare our hearts like fertile soil for the reading of your Word. Speak to us through the readings and the preaching of the word and enable us to be not just hearers, but doers of the Word which leads to life.

Old Testament 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: ²“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. ³This 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. ⁴For 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. ⁵ But if you do not obey these commands, declares the Lord, I swear by myself that this palace will become a ruin.” New International Version - UK (NIVUK)

Gospel Reading: Luke 4:16-21

¹⁶ 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, ¹⁷ and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

¹⁸ ‘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,
¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s
favour.’

²⁰ 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. ²¹ He began by saying to them, ‘Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.’ New International Version - UK (NIVUK)

A time to pause, read again, pray, and reflect.

Preaching notes: Freedom from the “hand of the oppressor” and “do what is just and right” - what do they really mean and what must we do other than just reading about it? To do what is “right” does not mean to behave in a way that *seems right* to us as individuals, that places a relativity or a condition on our actions, in this

context it means to do the “right” that God requires (God’s righteousness). In a similar way, act justly (with justice) is according to God’s standard, not our own. These are constant themes that are emphasised by God through His prophets year after year and then finally through His Son Jesus as we see in our Gospel passage. Micah 6:8 helpfully sums this up in a way that reminds us that these not actions that are preferable or optional, he asks: “what does the Lord require from you? To act justly, to love mercy and walk humbly with your God”.

God is speaking, through Jeremiah, to those who are directly involved in oppression and injustice but also, importantly, those who are complicit (see verse 2: “you, your officials and your people who come through these gates”).

Widows, orphans and the foreigner are often highlighted by God as those who must be cared for, this has not changed. Children in general are mentioned for special nurture and care by Jesus (Matthew 19:14) and those who cause children “to stumble” in their faith are singled out for particular treatment (Matthew 18:6).

The Gospel passage in Luke (also found in Matthew 4:12-17, Mark 1:14 and John 4:43-45) is at the start of Jesus’ ministry as Saviour, using the words given to the prophet Isaiah (61:1,2) by God, 700 years or so earlier, highlighting the purposes, plan and involvement of God in the past, present and future, not distant but up close and personal.

We are wrong if we think we do not know anyone who is “oppressed” or is a

“prisoner” or that we can have no part to play in their rescue/freedom. We, as Christians, have a particular and specific instruction from our Father to bring justice and to do what we can to set right the wrongs that are done around us.

“Reverend Thomas Bowman Stephenson saw children living rough under the arches of Waterloo station in London, he decided he had to act. And his first action was to listen. He gave children the respect of hearing their stories, before working out the most practical way to help”. This was over 150 years ago and his expression of faith in Jesus and his following of the commands of God led to the opening of the National Children’s Home. Poverty and oppression today may be harder to see. Children (like Lyle in our video story) trapped in homes with abusive, uncaring, self- obsessed and perhaps drug, alcohol or gambling addicted adults. Women (and sometimes men) controlled and abused mentally, physically and financially, these are amongst the “prisoners” and the “oppressed” of today.

As we close, it is important to know that God sees our hearts, He does not require us to feel inadequate or unworthy or guilty if we are not single-handedly resolving these issues. But I believe He does require our participation, within the gifts and physical abilities He has given us, to act and talk always with justice, to love showing mercy and compassion and to walk humbly with God and those He has placed us with -the church- in a way that means we listen to His leading, He will guide us by His Holy Spirit, speak to us and strengthen us for what He requires of us.

Amen. Rev’d Phillip Dixon

A full video version can be seen at:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCoF3pzV1QdM6DPfGUEAgp0g>

We pray: Father, we pray for Your wisdom for us to know how we should participate in Your Mission of setting free those who are trapped in lifestyles that are addictive and damaging. Unite us as a church, strengthen our faith, help us to focus on what You require so that we may disciple those who need to know Your love today.
Amen.

A message about Action for Children:

I would like to share with you something from *Time to Shine* – The newsletter for Action for Children. It says:-

Coronavirus has thrown all our lives, our communities and the UK into an unprecedented crisis. Families who were already struggling now find themselves unable to afford food and other essentials.

Before the virus hit there were over four million children in the UK locked in poverty. Now, vulnerable families in all our communities have reached breaking point. Families like Helen’s.

Helen, 50, is a full-time carer for her seven-year-old son Sam, who’s autistic. The family had been getting by on Helen's husband’s earnings as a taxi driver. But the crisis has hit their income hard.

She says – *“We’re literally living hand to mouth. When my husband said he’d only had a couple of driving jobs in a day, I didn’t know what to do. What if we can’t put food on the table? How long before we can get Universal Credit? What if we get ill and are stuck in lockdown? Nobody has an answer.*

On top of that, routine is essential with Sam's autism. I've been worrying about things like what we're going to tell him now we can't afford chicken nuggets for tea.

I'm struggling mentally and trying not to panic – to hold the family together – but I'm also thinking 'what next?' It's hurting the children, too – a lot of parents are saying kids who are normally quite together have been upset and in tears”.

There are families like Helen's all over the UK. They need our help right now.

Please hold the essential work of Action for Children in your prayers and any financial support you are able to give will be greatly appreciated.

Win George-Highcliffe A.F.C. Secretary

We pray together our 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.**

Prayers of Intercession:

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

(Philippians 4:6-7 NIV)

Gracious God, we bring our prayers for the work of Action for Children. We pray for children growing up with no sense of beauty, for children who are victims of abuse and neglect. Where children cry in need; let us hear their cry. Where there is exclusion or deprivation; give us the courage to challenge injustice. Where poverty is rife; give us generous hearts to share our resources.

Thank you for those who work within the organisation of Action for Children. We pray for vulnerable children who they seek to support, may they would be enabled to grow up in the knowledge that they are loved and cared for and that they would discover your love and purpose for them.

We pray for our country, for our leaders to exercise wisdom and integrity as they make decisions about our future as a nation. We pray for countries of the world which are experiencing huge problems and difficulties, particularly for Nigeria and Zimbabwe and for Christians who are being persecuted for their faith.

We thank you for your ongoing presence with us in all the turmoil and change we have experienced over these past months; for the beauty of creation; the amazing weather; the ability to have time to reflect and take stock of our lives.

We bring to you our feelings of bewilderment and confusion; the times when we have felt frustrated and alone and hope has deserted us. Fill us we pray, with the knowledge that nothing can separate us from your love and however we feel, you are with us in all our wondering and doubt.

We bring our fears to you, fears that have been engendered by new rules and laws which restrict our way of life. Help us, instead of being paralysed by fear, to act in love and care for others, seeking to keep both them and ourselves safe and well.

We bring our feelings of sadness for all those who have died and for their families who have been unable to share their final moments. We pray for those in our church family who are unwell or dealing with bereavement. May they discover that you are with them in all their struggles and suffering.

We bring our feelings of joy during this time. The joy of clapping with neighbours; the joy of communicating with others through modern technology; the joy of having time to focus on what really matters.

Loving God, we thank you that you bring light, hope and peace to the world. So, may that light which can never be overcome, shine in us and throughout the whole world.

We bring these prayers in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. **Amen**

Hymn: StF 696 For the healing of the nations. Sing/read /pray/proclaim the words.

For the healing of the nations,
Lord, we pray with one accord,
for a just and equal sharing
of the things that earth affords.
To a life of love in action
help us rise and pledge our word.

Lead us forward into freedom,
from despair your world release,
that, redeemed from war and hatred,
all may come and go in peace.

Show us how through care and goodness
fear will die and hope increase.

All that kills abundant living,
let it from the earth be banned:
pride of status, race or schooling,
dogmas that obscure your plan.
In our common quest for justice
may we hallow brief life's span.

You, Creator God, have written
your great name on humankind;
for our growing in your likeness
bring the life of Christ to mind;
that by our response and service
earth its destiny may find.

Fred Kaan (1929-2009)

Blessing: Now may the Lord of Peace
Himself give you peace at all times in all
ways, the Lord be with you all.

**The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with
us all. Amen**

Giving to Action for Children:

Online: actionforchildren.org.uk/donate

choose "single" to make a one-off
donation or "monthly" if you would like to
give regularly. You'll be asked how much
you'd like to give. You'll then have the
opportunity to say where your donation is
from, please mention your home church.

Cheque: Supporter Care Team, Action for
Children, 3 The Boulevard, Ascot Road,
Watford, WD18 8AG.

By phone: Call the Supporter Care Team
on 0300 123 2112, who'll take your
payment by card. If you would like to
please let us know so that we can say
"thank you".

Until we meet again, God bless. Phillip
Telephone 01425 673350

phillip.dixon@methodist.org.uk YouTube links
are external resources and are provided to help you engage
with the songs. Singing the Faith and Hymns and Psalms
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