Celebrate with The Children’s Society this Mothering Sunday
Foreword

Mothering Sunday, on the fourth Sunday in Lent, is a day for celebration when we thank God for our mothers, their care and concern for us, and for the love that they give us.

Today can also be a day to celebrate all those who care for others, and for consideration of those for whom this may be a painful time.

Many people, including volunteers and staff at The Children’s Society, care for children who have nowhere left to turn: some of the most vulnerable children in our communities. We celebrate all those who care for this country’s children and young people today.

Please use our free resources to not only celebrate mums and those who care for children and young people, but also to engage your congregation with the issues facing vulnerable children in our community. In addition to your worship time, you could:

- invite your congregation to pray with us
- hold a special collection to support our work
- invite your congregation to help us campaign for change.

Your support will enable us to change children’s lives.

Thank you,

Mo Baldwin
Director of Church Engagement
The Children’s Society
How to use our resources

These service elements have been designed for you to use as single standalone ideas, or as a complete package, to enable you to craft and personalise your service.

Our resources include many of the elements you will need to lead a service on Mothering Sunday. Our short talk for children can be useful if you plan to give a talk for the young people before they go out to Sunday School. Our prayers of gathering and of intercession, the Mothering Sunday readings, and our talk notes will help you open up the word of God about caring ‘mothering’ relationships. Taking an active part in the talk or service helps people remember your message. We have therefore included participatory elements in our service and Sunday School resources which will help everyone think about people who care, and thank God for these people. We also have a suggested hymn list which you can use if you are required to select songs for the service.

In addition to main service elements, you can also download our Sunday School resource, which are ideal for children aged eight and under. And if you have older children or the opportunity to speak to KS2 or Year 7 children, you may find our additional KS2 resource useful.

If you have a longer talk time, you could use our Deeper into Scripture: How did Jesus view family? resource and fun quiz. You may need to think about opening your service in prayer, as well as using prayers of intercessions later, so we have included suitable prayers. Our downloadable prayer cards will help everyone articulate prayers about mums and those who care for children, and stimulate prayer in the home environment.

We would greatly appreciate you taking the opportunity to speak about the work of The Children’s Society. Our focus for Mothering Sunday this year is on unaccompanied child refugees. Please share our online resource with your congregation to send messages of support to the children we work with, or use our KS2 extension resource to help children understand the plight of refugees.

All across the country, there are children who have fled war and violence, or have travelled long distances to reach safety here. We are working hard to help refugee children overcome the major challenges they face as they begin to rebuild their lives. We want to show these children that there are people who care about them, who welcome them and who support them.

Our complete resources include:

- What is Mothering Sunday? – Useful notes to help you explain the day
- Worship resources including:
  - Scripture readings for Mothering Sunday
  - A short talk for children
  - Main talk/address/sermon ideas
  - Mothering Sunday prayers
  - Mothering Sunday hymns
- Deeper into Scripture: How did Jesus view family?
- Congregational prayer cards for Mothering Sunday
- Sunday School and KS2 resources
- Sunday School 'Paddington' activity labels for children
- Sunday School 'Paddington' activity labels for mum/carer
- Congregational messages of support to child refugees
- KS2 and age 8+ messages of support to child refugees
- Mothering Sunday PowerPoint (adapt to fit your own talk)
- Mothering Sunday poster
- Speaking about the work of The Children’s Society
What is Mothering Sunday?

Mothering Sunday is celebrated in churches on the fourth Sunday in Lent. Traditionally it is a day when we thank God for the love of our mothers, and we thank them in person for their care for us.

The service dates back hundreds of years in the UK, when people were encouraged once a year, on Laetare Sunday, to return to their home or ‘mother’ church or cathedral. The name comes from the pre-reformation mass for this Sunday in Latin, which is from Isaiah 66.10 which speaks of the love for Jerusalem – the original ‘mother church’. This means that there is a small but distinct difference between Mothering Sunday, and ‘Mother’s Day’.

Mother’s Day is an American celebration that was instigated in 1914 as a holiday day on the second Sunday in May in the US, after a campaign by Anna Jarvis to recognise the important role of mothers in society following the death of her own mother. Initially the wearing of a white carnation and a proclamation from the House of Representatives honoured mothers. The commericalisation of the day rapidly grew (and Anna Jarvis is known to have spoken against).

Mothering Sunday as we know it today in the UK, and across the Anglican Communion, is an evolution of the traditional pre-reformation Laetere Sunday observance, the post-reformation practice of returning home from domestic service to visit church and family – picking flowers on the way to give to their mother and decorate the church – and the revival spearheaded by Anglican Constance Smith, who read the work of Anne Jarvis. Smith campaigned for a revival of Mothering Sunday observance in Lent, writing a book ‘Revival of Mothering Sunday’ in 1920. The book was so influential and widely read that by 1938 it was said that every parish in the UK celebrated Mothering Sunday.

Today Mothering Sunday is celebrated in churches to acknowledge and thank God for the love and care of mothers, to affirm our invitation and acceptance as children of God. Many churches provide small posies of flowers for children in the church to give to their mothers to thank them. Increasingly churches are aware of those for whom Mothering Sunday is a painful time and are including prayers and affirmations of care in all its forms for children, addressing issues of infertility, baby-loss, child-bereavement and parental bereavement, particularly of a mother.

The Children’s Society plays a caring role in the lives of over 18,000 children and young people with nowhere left to turn. Through partnership with the church we believe much can be done to bring ‘life in all its fullness’ to children and young people.
Scripture readings

For your celebration of Mothering Sunday our talk notes explore these two lectionary readings:

**1 Samuel 1.20–28**

In due time Hannah conceived and bore a son. She named him Samuel, for she said, ‘I have asked him of the LORD.' The man Elkanah and all his household went up to offer to the LORD the yearly sacrifice, and to pay his vow. But Hannah did not go up, for she said to her husband, ‘As soon as the child is weaned, I will bring him, that he may appear in the presence of the LORD, and remain there forever; I will offer him as a nazirite for all time.' Her husband Elkanah said to her, ‘Do what seems best to you, wait until you have weaned him; only—may the LORD establish his word.' So the woman remained and nursed her son, until she weaned him. When she had weaned him, she took him up with her, along with a three year old bull, an ephah of flour and a skin of wine. She brought him to the house of the LORD at Shiloh; and the child was young. Then they slaughtered the bull, and they brought the child to Eli. And she said, ‘Oh, my lord! As you live, my lord, I am the woman who was standing here in your presence, praying to the LORD. For this child I prayed; and the LORD has granted me the petition that I made to him. Therefore I have lent him to the LORD; as long as he lives, he is given to the LORD.' She left him there for the LORD.

And for your own reading familiarise yourself with the preceding verses **1 Samuel 1.1–19** to understand the context of Hannah’s story.

**John 19.25–27**

Meanwhile, standing near the cross of Jesus were his mother, and his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing beside her, he said to his mother, ‘Woman, here is your son.’ Then he said to the disciple, ‘Here is your mother.’ And from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.
Short all-age talk suitable for children

You may need:

- Enough prayer cards printed from our online resources for each person in your congregation
- Ready cut out paper chain figures
- Something like Parma Violet sweets to represent flowers
- Ask: who can tell me what they do to celebrate Mothering Sunday? It could be:
  - a card
  - Flowers
  - Chocolates
  - Or perhaps you did something caring – like making mum breakfast in bed?
- Explain that today is absolutely a celebration of our mothers and those who care for us. Give each of the young people your ready prepared paper chain figures, but ask them to NOT unfold them just yet!
- Ask them to write ‘mum’ on the first person in the chain.
- Ask if we can we think of the ways our mums love us and care for us? Write down some of the things your mum does for you, or the ways you know she loves you. (Ask nearby adults to help smaller children write these words on the first figure.)
- Tell the children that today we can celebrate everybody who plays a role in caring for young people.
- Ask everyone to unfold their paper chain. On the other figures in the chain ask them to write the names of other people who care for them (dad, teacher, aunty, granny etc). They can always turn over if they need to. Encourage them to take their paper people home and invite them to thank Jesus for these people in the week.
- Invite the young people to come forward to collect prayer cards and Parma Violets to give to their mum, or to someone who loves them and cares for them.
Talk/address/sermon ideas

Depending on the elements you decide to use, you may need:

- Enough **prayer cards** printed from our **online resources** for each person in your congregation
- Something like Parma Violet sweets to represent flowers
- Ideally, the ability to project our PowerPoint slides and to play Sister Sledge’s song ‘We are family’

**Hannah – a mother**

- Read and be familiar with 1 Samuel, the story of Hannah.
- She was loved by her husband, Elkanah. Her worth, in his eyes, was not diminished because they hadn’t had children together. For him, their relationship and the care they gave each other is what matters.
- But Hannah, like countless women throughout history, was distressed because she wanted to bear Elkanah a child.
- The grief of Hannah can be felt across the centuries. Many of us have known the pain of childlessness, and we are mindful of this today.
- Hannah is faithful in prayer. After years of taunts and insults from Peninnah, Elkanah’s other wife, her response is still only to take her petition and distress to God.
- God hears Hannah’s prayers, and the intercessions of Eli, and grants her not only Samuel, but three other sons and two daughters after Samuel. We celebrate mothers today – those who have had their deepest longings answered and all who continue to call on God to answer their prayer.
- For those here today who do find Mothering Sunday difficult, Hannah is a woman who experiences all the stages of grief: denial; anger; bargaining with God; depression and distress; acceptance. Was Hannah a ‘good mother’?
- Hannah gave her son back to God, in thankfulness. Today it would be frowned upon to take your child to be ‘fostered’ by the church. But we can all be thankful for the gift of children – which is a gift to all (Psalm 127). Every year, Hannah echoed today’s ‘Mothering Sunday’ by travelling back to her ‘mother church’ (the Temple) where she would see her son, Samuel.
- Tell the story of Paddington Bear, and how his Aunt sent him in faith into the unknown trusting that someone would look after him.

Some of our **Sunday School and KS2 resources** could be used here in an all age talk:
John 19.25–27 ‘We are all invited to be part of God’s family’

- When Jesus was facing death on the cross, he turned to his beloved disciple (believed to be James) and asked him to take his place in caring for his mum.
- This isn’t the only time Jesus challenged a traditional biological view of the family.
- Jesus was a Jew. Jews defined themselves as God’s people through their descent from Abraham and Sarah: they all had Abraham and Sarah as their great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-great-grand-parents. Hannah had been a part of that family.
- Jesus broke away from this Jewish way of seeing family: ‘But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.’ John 1.12–13
- Jesus said anyone who accepts the invitation is welcome to join God’s family, no matter who their parents are, how rich they are, what they look like or anything else.
- If you have time, at this point you could use our additional material ‘Deeper into Scripture: how did Jesus view family?’ It includes a quiz!
- We can all be part of God’s family.
- If you feel like dancing, why not get everyone to join in with the actions and sing along with Sister Sledge’s song ‘We are family’ (pause after 1:05)
- Family is a deeply important thing. It provides a safe place for us to love and care for one another.
- As a sign of this, if you haven’t already done so, invite people to come forward to collect prayer cards and Parma Violets for everyone in their row, pew or similar.
- Do this to represent the cards and flowers that are traditionally given out on Mothering Sunday as anyone can be family.
- Some people have to leave their family, eg refugees or children who are forced to run away and need organisations to care for them.
- Some mums are themselves vulnerable, and need help in caring for their children. Share the story of Mary, a mum and her children, who were helped by The Children’s Society.
- End with a prayer thanking God for mums and all who care for us.
Speaking about The Children's Society

Show children you’re on their side

The Children's Society works with the most vulnerable children and young people through our local services across the country. By listening to them, we know just how deeply a supportive environment can transform their lives. You could use our story of Hou, a child refugee supported by The Children’s Society, or the story of a family we work with such as Mary’s story, to show how children flourish when the family unit is supported.

Our project workers run one-to-one and group work sessions that help thousands of children, including those who are carers for their parents or siblings, those who have difficult or traumatic relationships with their parents due to neglect or abuse, and those who are separated from their parents as unaccompanied child refugees.

In our resources we have included downloadable luggage labels of support that your congregation can complete and send back to us. These will be sent as messages of encouragement and greeting to unaccompanied refugee children.

Consider signing up to become a campaign champion, and help increase the impact of our campaigning at a local and national level, or join our campaigns online to amplify our voice and increase the impact we can have across the country.

There are all sorts of ways to get involved from signing petitions, to meeting MPs, to organising events to raise awareness of the issues we campaign on.

Story of an unaccompanied refugee child: Hou’s story

When Hou was just 13 his parents were taken away by the authorities in his home country of China. His family were being persecuted for their faith. Hou was told they were dead. Fearing for his life, a family friend arranged for Hou to escape from China to come to the UK. He was taken to a British couple, who abused Hou. They didn’t allow him to leave the house or go to school. After a number of months, Hou managed to escape and started sleeping rough in London. He was soon recruited by a gang who he lived with for a number of years. All of the men involved were older, and Hou never met another child. Hou managed to escape the gang, and he left London working in kitchens up and down the country. 'No one asked my age' says Hou,'they just wanted me to work.' But then Hou was brought back to London by the gang. They treated him badly, and threatened his life if he went to the police. 'When I think about that time, even now I feel very scared' says Hou, 'It was a very hard time. I felt I had no choices.' One day while working for the gang, Hou was arrested and sent to prison for a lengthy sentence. After serving half of his time, Hou was told he would be moved to an immigration detention centre, and stay there indefinitely. Hou began a hunger strike in an attempt to end his life. He was referred to The Children’s Society who supported him to appeal his deportation order and apply for asylum. His project worker also provided him with one-to-one sessions to help him recover from his years of trauma and subsequent mental health issues. Hou is now 24 and has been awarded refugee status.
Story of Family support: Mary’s Story
A useful story to illustrate the work of The Children’s Society with the whole family.

When Mary left her alcoholic partner after years of abuse, fleeing with her three children, she had no money, no food, no toys, no plan. She just knew she couldn’t go back. A Ghanaian national, Mary had no immigration status in the UK, and no access to public funds. She was provided with housing for her and her children in a new city. She was safe and had a roof over her head, but she had no money for anything else: no money for food, no money for clothes for the children, no money for energy bills to keep them warm and no furniture. Living in a new city meant Mary knew no one. She felt so alone. The worries were making her ill, and there seemed to be no one she could turn to.

Then someone introduced her to The Children’s Society. They had a weekly food drop where she could get fresh food for herself and her children and even provided her with a fridge. A support worker from The Children’s Society was able to provide shoes and clothes for the children and help Mary access the legal support she needed for her social services assessment. Her support worker also helped Mary get a school place for her son. Mary was overwhelmed. She told us, ‘The kids they are now sociable, before they were always sad. I have noticed a real change in them, so much...when I look back, we’re all happier now.’

The work of The Children’s Society meant Mary was given support when she needed it. But the story doesn’t end there. Mary was not only helped, but saw the needs of other families in similar situations to hers. Knowing the difference that support had made to her life and the lives of her children, Mary was inspired to help others. She now helps others by volunteering in the food drop project that first helped her. That support to one vulnerable family has become a support to many.

If you have any questions, or want to find out more about other ways of supporting the work of The Children’s Society, please contact our friendly Supporter Care team on 0300 303 7000 or by email at supportercare@childrenssociety.org.uk

We do hope that these resources are helpful and that they inspire you and your congregation to continue to show support to children who have nowhere left to turn.
Mothering Sunday prayers

Opening prayers

As we come to worship you, Loving God, we remember with thankful hearts our families, and the care of our mothers. We thank you today for all those who care for us, and remember those who are now with you, who have cared for us in the past. Lord Jesus, who knew the love and care of parents, help us to love and care for others.

On a large sheet of paper, draw a picture of a mother on the left hand side (artistic ability not required: it could be a stick-person image). At the start of the worship, invite people to suggest words to describe what mothers (or those who take on a mothering role) do for us, and write in a list down the right-hand side of the paper. Finish the list by saying a suitable prayer:

God our Father,
your Son, Jesus Christ,
lived in a family.
As we meet together now help us to learn more about what it is to love our families and friends as you love us. Through Jesus Christ our Lord,

Amen.

Collects and intercessions

A collect for Mothering Sunday from Common Worship, Church of England

God of love, passionate and strong, tender and careful: watch over us and hold us all the days of our life; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Loving God,
We thank you for our mothers, who gave life to us, and who care for us.
We are blessed by their self-sacrifice and love.
Response: Bless them today and every day.

We pray today for new mothers, asking you to imbue them with patience, wisdom and love.

Bless them today and every day.

(To be read by a child in the congregation) We thank you for the way our mums love us, even when we disappoint or upset them.

Bless them today and every day.

We remember before you those who are mums who parent children with physical or mental-health challenges, asking for strength and courage for them. In the exhaustion and frustrations, in the joys and celebrations, may they know you are alongside them.

Bless them today and every day.
We pray for mothers who are struggling; for those who do not have enough money, to put food on the table, or to heat their homes. For mums whose hearts cry out to you in pain, because they rely on the care of their children.

**Bless them today and every day.**

We ask for you to send your peace on those who have lost their longed-for child in death, and those who have children adopted or living away from home.

**Bless them today and every day.**

We pray too for those who don’t know the love of a mother or father, and those who have experienced a difficult relationship with a parent. For those who have experienced loss or neglect.

**Bless them today and every day.**

*God of love, hear these prayers and answer them, for the sake of your children.*
*We pray in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*

**Amen.**

Additional, interactive, prayers of intercession can be found [here](#).
Mothering Sunday hymns

We have put together a collection of songs and hymns for your Mothering Sunday service.

The songs and hymns below are chosen for Mothering Sunday to enhance the celebration by reflecting the day’s themes of thankfulness and care, whether to God or those around us.

- Give Thanks with a Grateful Heart (Henry Smith or Don Moen)
- All Things Bright and Beautiful (contained in most hymn books)
- Brother, Sister Let Me Serve You (by Richard Gillard)
- Dear Lord and Father of Mankind (contained in most hymn books)
- He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands (by Tim Hughes)
- Lord of All Hopefulness (contained in most hymn books)
- For the Beauty of the Earth (contained in most hymn books)
- Jesus Put This Song Into Our Hearts (by Graham Kendrick)
- To God be the Glory, Great Things He Hath Done (contained in most hymn books)
- Beautiful Saviour (by Stuart Townsend)
- The Lord’s my Shepherd, I’ll not want (contained in most hymn books)
- A Mother Lined a Basket (linked to the story of Moses, one of the readings for Mothering Sunday – for more see our 2016 resources)

Unfortunately, due to copyright restrictions we haven’t been able to reproduce the lyrics and music sheets but we have chosen songs that are widely available.
Deeper into Scripture: How did Jesus view family?

Jesus has a different take on family to most

- Play the quiz ‘How did Jesus view family?’ in the PowerPoint. You could invite people to stand (if they are able) then put their hand on their heart if they think Jesus did say it, or on their bottoms if they don’t think he did.
  - If people get it wrong, they have to sit down. See if anyone can get all the quotes correct.

- Jesus had some pretty provocative things to say about family relationships (you could add a comment about how many people did or didn’t get all six). Jesus certainly didn’t have an overly rosy view of family life, he predicted families would turn against one another because of him. This is something we may not expect from Jesus.
  - As we heard, he appeared to ignore his mother and brothers in favour of his disciples. (Mark 3.31–35)
  - He had a track record of this and, at the tender age of 12, he had already left his parents to stay in his Father’s house, the Temple.

- And whilst all of these provocative elements are part of Jesus’ take on the family, they aren’t the full picture. Because at the same time, as we heard in today’s reading from John’s Gospel, 9 of the last 15 words of Jesus were about establishing and caring for his family when he was gone.
  - Earlier in the chapter Jesus had been publically rejected by the leaders of his community, the Pharisees, who called for him to be crucified.
  - It is highly plausible that some of the people who were in the Temple with him when he was 12 years old were also in the crowd who were calling for him to be crucified.
  - Despite this emotional anguish, despite the physical pain, Jesus had real clarity of thought on the cross. The simple but powerful words, ‘Woman, here is your son’ and ‘Here is your mother’ show how highly Jesus valued caring, family relationships.
  - It only takes one line for their impact to be apparent, because from that hour the disciple took her into his own home.

- What are we to make of this?
  - The people who we count as family, the people who we care for, don’t have to be related to us.
Sunday School Resources for Mothering Sunday

Sketch out on a large sheet of craft paper the outline of an old-fashioned suitcase.

Paddington Bear story and discussion:

*Ask:* Who has ever been on a journey? Who did you travel with? What did you take with you? Where were you going? Did you speak the same language as people there?

This is a story you may know. Who has heard of Paddington Bear? Paddington was a young bear who lived with his elderly aunt. When she could no longer take care of him (she went to live in a home for retired bears), she felt the best thing for Paddington would be to journey across the world from his home in Peru, to England, where he could have a better life. So Paddington leaves Peru in a large ship, with a suitcase full of marmalade sandwiches (who has tried marmalade sandwiches?), which were his absolute favourite food, his duffle coat and his hat. And one other thing...

*Who can tell me what the one other thing Paddington had on his journey was?* (some discussion about tickets, passports, money etc may ensue).

All good things for a journey. But the thing that we know for sure was the extra item that Paddington Bear had was a luggage label, tied to his coat.

*Ask:* Who knows what it said?

That’s right ‘Please look after this bear. Thank you!’

She couldn’t look after him, but Aunt Lucy hoped and prayed that someone would look after Paddington when he arrived in London.

Paddington was very lucky. The Brown Family happened to find him in Paddington Station in London, and they took him home with them and he became part of their family.

**Activity**

Using our *Paddington activity labels*, encourage each child to think through information about them, and their families, that they might tell someone if they were on a journey.

Please look after this child

I am: ...........................(name)

I live with: .................... (who cares for me):

I love: ..........................

I like to eat: ........................

Help each child tie on their label so they are wearing it when they go back into the service or meet their family and/or carers after church.

We can all care – why not help someone look after your mum today?

*Say:* Today is Mothering Sunday. Today we can thank God for our mothers, and for those people who care for us. And we can show we love them by asking God to take care of them for us.

Give each child a *mum/carer activity label* which is about the person they love who cares for them.
Say: Your mum or carer will probably need your help to fill it in. They’ll definitely need help with drawing the picture.

Dear God, Please look after

Name: ........................................

They love me because .................................................. 

They like it when I .............................................................

[and on the other side]

This is a picture of us.

Say: Just like you’re wearing your label, let’s get your mum or carer to wear their prayer label too!

Prayers

Jesus, thank you for making me part of a family, for giving me people to care for me and love me. Please look after children who are journeying to find safe places where people will care for them.

Jesus, sometimes we are ‘mislabelled’, and people get the wrong information about us. When this happens please help put things right. Help people see more than our ‘label’ and love the whole of us.

Amen
What mums say

Use for Mothering Sunday or adapt for family ministry throughout the year.

This is a discussion and creative activity for children in small groups. As the leader you should guide them through the conversation, allowing each child to have their say.

You will need

- Speech bubbles printed out on two different colours of paper (such as yellow and blue) large enough for children to write on. Two speech bubbles to an A4 sheet is an idea size.
- Pens or pencils (and scissors if the speech bubbles are not cut out in advance).
- Two giant speech bubbles to stick the smaller ones onto, and to display or take into church at the end.

Ask the children to talk about the main people who look after them and care for them. This needs to be handled sensitively for those children who do not have a ‘mum’ looking after them, so the discussion should be kept as wide as possible and include other carers. Then move on to ask them what their mums, carers or others who look after them say to them in the following situations:

1. First thing in the morning when it is time to get up
2. When they are feeling unwell or sick
3. When they are tucking them up in bed or snuggling on the settee
4. When they are feeling upset or lonely
5. When they are cross or angry

Give each child one speech bubble of the same colour.

Then ask each child to think of the word or words that they most like hearing from their mums or other carers. Encourage them to write the word or short phrase onto the speech bubble, helping those who need assistance.

Once they are done, collect in the speech bubbles and have a helper stick them onto one of the giant speech bubbles, while continuing the discussion.

Ask the children one word or short phrase they like to say to their mum or carer. Then hand out the speech bubbles in the different colour, and ask the children to write that word or phrase onto one. Likewise these should be collected and stuck onto the other giant speech bubble.

The giant speech bubbles should then be displayed, and the words and phrases read out. Then the following prayer could be said:

Thank you, loving God, that you say good things to us to show us your love.

Thank you for the good things our mothers and carers say to us.

Thank you for the good things we can say to them.

Thank you, loving God, that we can say good things to show our love.

Amen

If there is time when the children are collected from their groups or when the children return to the church, use the prayer and show the giant speech bubbles. This can be introduced or concluded by a reminder that our words are important, and then by asking mums and carers to shout out their endings to these phrases:

I love being a mum because I can...
My main role is to make sure...
I do my best, but if I could do more I would...
As a mother I have to have lots of...
When I lose patience with the kids I really want to...

We’re very grateful to Nick Harding, Children’s Ministry Advisor, Diocese of Southwell & Nottingham for kindly writing this resource.
Tell the abbreviated story of Paddington in our Sunday School resource.

Explain that Paddington Bear might be described as a ‘refugee’ or ‘migrant’. It means someone who may not want to leave home but has to (for any number of different reasons) to find a place of safety.

Did you know that Jesus was a refugee? When he was a baby the King, Herod, wanted to kill him. He and his family had to leave Bethlehem and go to a place of safety in Jerusalem.

You could get one of the children to read Matthew 2.13-15 from a Children’s Bible. Or use our retelling below:

‘After the Wise Men had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Wake up, take the child Jesus and his mother (Mary), and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you it is safe to come home, because Herod is looking for the child and wants to destroy him.” So Joseph got up, took Jesus and Mary and they travelled by night to Egypt and stayed there until King Herod had died.’

Who has read or heard Michelle Magorian’s story ‘Goodnight Mr Tom’? It’s a great story about a boy who had to leave London to escape the bombs of World War Two over 70 years ago. Each child travelled without their family – sometimes with they went with their school, sometimes just by themselves. Each child had a label, just like Paddington, and carried a small suitcase, just like this one (use picture or drawing of an old suitcase).

Children are still escaping danger or severe poverty and travelling alone to a place of safety like the UK. Over 4,000 children travelling without a grown up came to the UK in 2015/16.

Share the story of Hou, a child refugee helped by The Children’s Society (page 10).

The Children’s Society supports children who have had to escape their countries, and leave their family, to find places of safety here in the UK. Like Paddington they arrive not knowing anyone, and often they can’t speak the same language as we do. Like Paddington, they may not know where they are going to sleep, or who will care for them.

Imagine how lovely getting a message from someone friendly could be.

Because we’re doing activity labels today, we can use these to send messages to children who come here as refugees.

Have each child choose a support message to complete and send back to The Children’s Society Campaigns Team.

You could stick them onto the picture of the suitcase you’ve created. If your church has social media, you could Tweet a picture of your suitcase and messages to us using our handle @childrensociety

Children’s prayers

Jesus, thank you for making me part of a family, for giving me people to care for me and love me. Please look after children who are journeying to find safe places where people will care for them.

Amen

Jesus, sometimes we are ‘mislabelled’ and people get the wrong information about us. When this happens please help put things right. Help people see more than our ‘label’ and love the whole of us.

Amen

Jesus, we pray for all refugees, particularly children without families. Keep them safe from danger, and bring them to a place of safety, and give them all they need to live happy lives.

Amen

‘After the Wise Men had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Wake up, take the child Jesus and his mother (Mary), and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you it is safe to come home, because Herod is looking for the child and wants to destroy him.” So Joseph got up, took Jesus and Mary and they travelled by night to Egypt and stayed there until King Herod had died.’
It is a painful fact that many children and young people in Britain today are still suffering extreme hardship, abuse and neglect. Too often their problems are ignored and their voices unheard.

The Children’s Society is a national charity that runs local services, helping children and young people when they are at their most vulnerable, and have nowhere left to turn.

We also campaign for changes to laws affecting children and young people, to stop the mistakes of the past being repeated in the future.

Our supporters around the country fund our services and join our campaigns to show children and young people they are on their side.

We are proud of our close partnership with the Church, who play a vital role in our work. We want to work with every church in the country so that, together, we can change the lives of many, many more children.

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