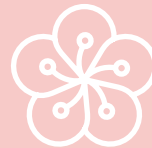
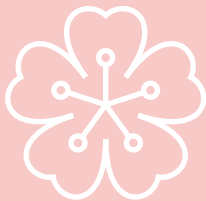
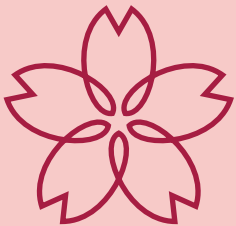


# **Growing and flourishing together**



**A special worship service in  
support of Action for Children**

**He has shown you,  
O mortal, what is good.  
And what does the Lord  
require of you?  
To act justly and to love  
mercy and to walk humbly  
with your God.**

**Micah 6:8**

**This is my commandment,  
that you love one another  
as I have loved you.**

**John 15:12**

## Dear friends,

At Action for Children we see every day the transformative difference that a nurturing, supportive and loving environment makes to the lives of children, young people and their families. This year, Action for Children Sunday focuses on this connectedness we have as humans and God's commandment to love one another as we are loved by God. In these challenging times for so many families, I hope that this resource will supplement the Methodist calling as people of faith to respond to God's love through worship and mission.

This year we have created two short video stories which you may like to play during a service. One film features Tan Y Bryn, a home which offers the chance for vulnerable children who have experienced trauma to have safe and happy childhoods. The other is the story of Terri, a Mum who has benefitted from parenting classes and support which has meant she is able to offer her young son, Keagan, a great start in life. The stories also feature in the worship material. We hope these inspirational stories will help provide focus for your worship.

Thank you for your prayers and for your continued commitment to help us to enable thousands of children and young people to have safe and happy childhoods.

I would be thrilled to receive news and photos from your Action for Children Sunday services and activities.

Thanks to Roots on the Web for once again creating this worship resource.

With best wishes



**Anna McCrum**

Interim Faith Partnerships Lead

[anna.mccrum@actionforchildren.org.uk](mailto:anna.mccrum@actionforchildren.org.uk)

# The essentials

## Planning your Action for Children Sunday Service

We hope this booklet will help you to plan a special worship service in support of Action for Children. You can use it on Action for Children Sunday – the second Sunday in July – or at any other time or event. Please feel free to choose different hymns, prayers and activities, or to change the format.

Your regional community fundraiser can help you with your planning, and can also send you lots of useful fundraising materials, including:

– **Gift Aid envelopes.**

– **Posters.**

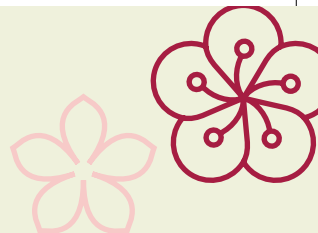
– **Leaflets.**



You can find their details on the contact sheet enclosed with this mailing, or at: [actionforchildren.uk/faithFR](https://actionforchildren.uk/faithFR). (This link is also where you can download extra copies of this booklet and PowerPoint slides.)

A great way to bring our work to life is to get one of our friendly speakers to talk at your church. Get in touch with your regional fundraiser to find out more.

# Terri's story



*“I believe in myself more as a parent.”*

When Terri discovered she was pregnant she found it hard to cope, and the news hit her “like a ton of bricks.” Terri’s two older children live with her Mum. During her pregnancy with Keagan, Terri received support from Action for Children’s programme, Baby Steps, which helped support her with parenting Keagan and keeping in contact with her two daughters.

Anita Jones from Action for Children who has supported Terri says the parenting course covers areas such as babies’ brain development, attachment patterns, parental mental health, and confidence building. Keeping in touch with Terri was also an important part of the course. Terri was given a tablet on which she recorded lots of videos. Anita says, “When you saw the interaction between mother and baby, you could just see how well Terri was doing.”

Speaking about the Action for Children staff who supported her she says, “They were nice, they were calming, they were always helpful. I never felt judged.” And as a result she says, “I believe in myself more as parent.”

“I didn’t think I would pass my assessments to be a Mum again but they have showed me that people with a background like mine can overcome certain stuff in life. And it is about asking for help and it is about receiving the help and accepting it. They have helped me in more ways than I can imagine.”

Watch a short film about Terri here: [actionforchildren.uk/faithFR](https://actionforchildren.uk/faithFR)

# All-age service outline

## Overview

As we look at Jesus' illustration of a vine growing, we see the working together of the gardener, the vine and the branches to produce a good crop of grapes. How do the gardener, the vine, the branches and the crop relate to each other? How does their interconnectedness reflect our relationship with Jesus and with one another? How does this encourage us to 'Love each other as I have loved you'?

## Gather

## Hymn

## An introduction or 'starting point'

**You will need:** a box or bag containing some tomatoes, a plant pot, 'how to grow' book or magazine, a watering can, tomato plant food, a packet of tomato seeds, a piece of garden cane, string, secateurs.

**Ask:** Who likes tomatoes? (hold up tomatoes) Has anyone ever tried growing them? I've got some things that might help (take out each item as you mention it, and either have a volunteer hold them or put them on a table.). A pot – it'll hold the compost. Some instructions – I might need them later. A watering can – because plants need water. Plant food – food to help the plant

grow. Seeds. A garden cane – that will come in handy to support the plant as it grows. String – useful to tie it to the cane to support it as it grows bigger. Secateurs – very useful to snip off any dead leaves and broken bits. Well, I'm all set now. I wonder if we'll hear anything more about growing plants today?

## Prayer

Loving Lord,  
in your love you call us together to spend time with you and one another.  
Be in our listening, our speaking, our wondering and our pondering. Support us and challenge us, so that we in turn can support and challenge people and places and systems – in your name. **Amen.**

## Share the word

**First reading: Micah 6:8**

*You may choose to use the drama on page 22 to explore the reading.*

## Hymn

## Share the word

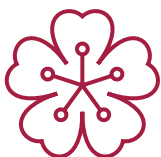
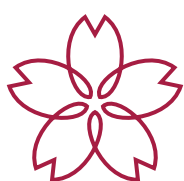
**Second reading: John 15:1-12**

*Show a growing plant in a pot, a tomato plant if possible. Ask if anyone knows what it is. Continue with the props bag from the **Introduction**. Ask if anyone remembers what was in the bag to help grow a tomato plant. Display the relevant items again.*

Today's reading mentions a gardener and a plant, not a tomato plant but a grape vine. When you hear the word 'fruit', can you shout out the words 'or tomatoes'? Read the passage, pausing each time the word 'fruit' is said to allow everyone to shout 'or tomatoes'.

## Talk about Action for Children's work

*If you have invited a guest speaker from Action for Children, they may give their talk here followed by the special offering for Action for Children's work.*



## Offering for Action for Children's work

*Thanksgiving prayer after the offering.*

Generous God, thank you for equipping each of us for the work you have called us to do in your name.

Accept the gifts we offer here today. May Action for Children use them wisely, as they work to make sure each child has a safe and happy childhood and the foundations they need to thrive.

Compassionate Lord, thank you for your presence in the hearts of those working alongside parents and carers who are struggling; accept the prayers we offer here today.

May the practical support Action for Children gives, overturn the poverty, abuse and mental health challenges that stop children from experiencing love in all its fulness.

Encouraging Holy Spirit, thank you for the hope and love you bring to the lives of people forgotten in the shadows. Help us not to accept the ways in which children are robbed of brighter futures.

May their voices be heard in Action for Children's campaigns, and bring lasting improvements for the children.

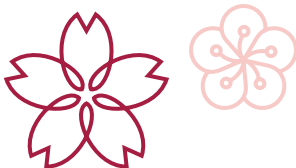
We bring our gifts, our prayers, our hopes in the name of Jesus, who called us all to be branches of the one true vine.

**Amen.**

## Sermon ideas

### Growing plants

The gardener digs the soil and plants the seeds, keeps them warm and watered and watches them grow, caring for them all the while, so that they produce the best, biggest, tastiest tomatoes. Jesus and his disciples saw grape vines (rather than tomato plants) as they travelled around. But vines need just as much looking after to produce the sweetest, juiciest grapes. Jesus uses this illustration of caring for plants to talk about being loved by God and how Jesus helps us to 'grow' to be the best that we can be. Jesus goes on to ask us to look out for one another. He asks us to be aware of people who need support to 'grow', to be the best that they can be. What might stop people having all they need to 'grow'? What might we do to help? How can we support the work of Action for Children?



### What will you need?

**You will need:** pre-cut shapes of the sun, raindrops, compost, roots, stems, leaves and flowers.

Ask for helpers. Hold up part of the plant and have a helper stick it to a board/wall. Repeat until the plant is complete. Ask: What does the plant need to help it to grow? Add raindrops, sun and soil to the picture, commenting on why each of them is necessary and the problems the plant might have if it doesn't get enough water, light or nutrients. Children need to have certain things to grow too. What might these be? When these are missing from the lives of children their growth and development can be affected. Show or talk about examples of Action for Children projects.

### A 'thought for the week'

A talk to read out if no authorised preacher is present.

I wonder if you have seen a vine growing grapes? The vine can be long and spindly, often growing up and along canes to support it. The grapes hang from the vine in bunches. To grow really good grapes you need to look after the grape vine. It needs planting in soil it likes, watered just enough, and tied up for support as it grows. The vine carries the nutrients to the branches that grow the grapes. If the vine doesn't get what it needs it cannot feed the branches. The grapes that grow will



be little and not as tasty and juicy. It might not be able to produce any grapes at all.

In the story, we heard Jesus using the example of a vine to talk about God's love and support. God is like the gardener, providing the food and the place to thrive that we need. Jesus is the vine itself, the roots and heart of the plant. We are the branches connected to it. The vine gives us food and water and all we need for our lives – the fruit, the grapes – to be the best that we can be. The story reminds us that we need to stay connected to Jesus, learning from him and living like him. If our choices lead us away from Jesus then we won't be as 'fruitful' as we could be.

But there is even more to this story. After talking about the vine growing, Jesus commanded his followers to 'Love each other as I have loved you'. As Jesus cares for and guides us, he commands that we, in turn, care for and help others to have positive life opportunities. If we don't have enough food and water, if we don't have a good living environment, if we are not supported, then we – like the vine – can struggle to reach our potential. To be fulfilled.

That is true of others too, which brings Jesus' command into focus. Today, as we hear about the work of Action for Children, we realise

that many children do not have all that they need. Many families are struggling to make ends meet, sometimes choosing between food or fuel. Some are caught up in a cycle of debt. Some working families bring home insufficient money to pay the bills. Children living this reality, like the weakened vine, are at risk of not having what they need to thrive.

Loving each other as we are loved is a challenge to us. A challenge to support as we are able through prayer, action, with our voices, in listening to and supporting others, by being aware of what is happening around us, and more. Together, as we are loved and supported by Christ and each other, we can grow strong. Together we can make a difference. And together we can be all that God created us to be.



# Alice's story

**Alice\* always worked full-time, but after tragically losing her husband to Covid, she had to give up work to support her daughter's additional care needs.**

Our recent research showed single-parents like Alice face many practical and financial difficulties as the main carer for a child. It can be much harder to enter and progress in work, afford childcare, or pay for essentials.

Many are completely reliant on the social security system and the support of friends, family and charities. Many will have no choice but to get into debt to pay the bills. We're calling on the government to act now to bring families out of poverty.



***“ I had to give [my job] up because I couldn't find any childcare. I was having a lot of issues with my daughter's behaviour and things like that. So, I had to end up giving my work [...] I'm now the main carer. I stay at home. So it's a big financial change there. ”***

Alice

Our research found that up to 1.95million children in poverty are living in families that face at least one significant barrier to work or taking on more work. The government must take action to help lift families out of poverty and hardship. Read the summary of our poverty report on our website and use our digital tool to find out the impact of child poverty in your area: [actionforchildren.org.uk/our-work-and-impact/policy-work-campaigns-and-research/](https://actionforchildren.org.uk/our-work-and-impact/policy-work-campaigns-and-research/)

## Hymn

### Explore & respond

*A choice of active ideas to explore the theme.*

#### Play Jenga™

Tape short 'arrow' prayers to some of the blocks in a Jenga™ or Giant Jenga™ game – e.g. 'Thank you for the work of Action for Children', 'We pray for children who are hungry', 'Thank you for the children helped by Action for Children', 'Help us to share your love with others'.

Play the game, and when a block is pulled out of the stack that has a prayer on it, the group (of the individual who freed the block) says the prayer. In the game itself, the bricks are dependent on one another for the tower to stay up; as they are removed, the tower loses its stability and strength and eventually it falls. Ask people what they take from this about people working together.

#### Time for reflection

Watch the short films that go with this resource. While watching invite everyone to reflect on the words of Jesus' command. Read the whole phrase, slowly. Then read it again, one or two words at a time, pausing to allow people to focus on those words. Leave a longer pause after this, then read the whole phrase again, once or twice. The phrase,

with shorter sections marked, is:  
'Jesus says,/My command/is this:/ Love/each other/as I have loved/ you'.

#### Loving wall

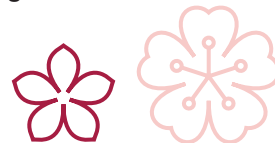
Offer an assortment of sticky notes and pens. Invite people to describe in words or pictures things that they consider to be 'great acts of love' or 'love in action'. These may be personal, local and domestic, or world-changing and famous. Stick the notes together to create a 'loving wall' and, when it is complete, invite everyone to read it.

#### Action prayer for all ages

*Practise the actions before saying the prayer together.*

Loving Lord,  
teach us to love (cross hands over heart)  
one another (sweep right hand out in front in a semicircle)  
as you (point to upwards)  
love us. (cross hands over heart)  
As you (point upwards)  
give us (open hand as if receiving)  
the things we need to grow,  
(hands 'grow' upwards)  
may we share (move closed hand outwards to others – repeat)  
with others and help them to grow too. (wave hands in air as if cheering)

**Amen.**



## Go with God

**You will need:** *small card-shaped hearts, crayons or coloured pens, quiet background music (optional).*

*Invite everyone to hold a heart and look at the shape. Say that it represents all the love in their life. Ask them to reflect for a few moments on the shape of love in their life – how or what makes them feel loved? Invite them to colour or add patterns to the heart, making it bright and vibrant. As they do so, ponder how or where they could share love or support the work of Action for Children.*

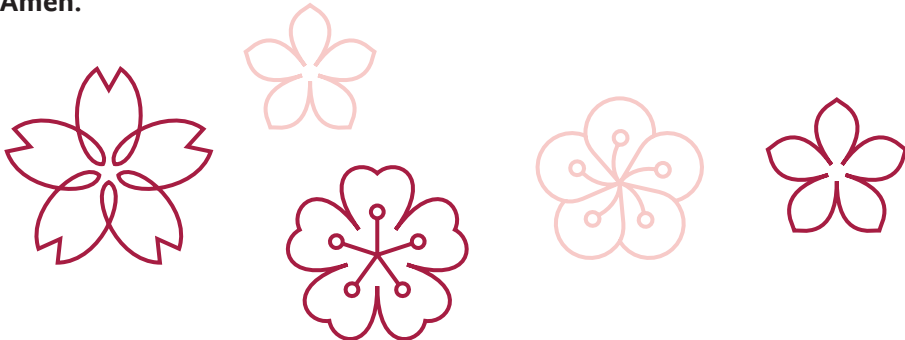
## Prayer

Lord, we hear your words to love one another, but we hardly know where to begin.

We see poverty around us. We see children in families that struggle.

Help us not to be overwhelmed, but to discover the opportunities we have to loving as you love us. Bless the work of Action for Children in giving practical meaning to love in action.

**Amen.**



## Putting your faith into action

Find out about the impact of poverty on children in your area by using our digital tool:

**[actionforchildren.org.uk/our-work-and-impact/policy-work-campaigns-and-research/](https://actionforchildren.org.uk/our-work-and-impact/policy-work-campaigns-and-research/)**

Join us, take a stand and raise your voice for safe and happy childhoods. Sign up to hear about Action for Children's policy campaigns:

**[actionforchildren.org.uk/support-us/campaign-with-us/](https://actionforchildren.org.uk/support-us/campaign-with-us/)**

Take part in one of our fundraising events or create one for your local church community:

**[actionforchildren.org.uk/support-us/fundraise-with-us/](https://actionforchildren.org.uk/support-us/fundraise-with-us/)**

Pray regularly for Action for Children's work.

Order our free pack to find out how to leave a gift in your will that could help transform a child's life: **[actionforchildren.org.uk/support-us/make-a-donation/leave-a-gift-in-your-will/](https://actionforchildren.org.uk/support-us/make-a-donation/leave-a-gift-in-your-will/)**



## Hymn suggestions

### Suggestions for adult and all ages

Alleluia, Alleluia! hearts to heaven and voices raise  
All who would valiant be  
A new commandment I give now to you  
Be thou my guardian and my guide  
Bread of heaven on thee we feed  
Father, hear the prayer we offer  
I, the Lord of sea and sky  
Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ, here among us  
Jesus, united by thy grace  
Jesus, you are changing me  
Keep on going, keep on growing  
Lord, for the years your love has kept and guided  
Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy  
Multiply your love through us  
Now the green blade rises from the buried grain  
See his kingdom growing  
Stay with me, remain here with me  
We are being built into a Temple  
You are so wonderful  
You are the vine, we are the branches

# Tan Y Bryn

**Tan Y Bryn is a five bed therapeutic children's home set in rural north Wales. Caroline Morris, Manager of the home, says, "The children who normally come to live there have experienced trauma whether it is drugs or alcohol use at home, domestic violence or physical or sexual abuse."**



Speaking about the approach the staff have to the young people who come to live at Tan Y Bryn, she says, "We want to give the children the best childhood possible because they've obviously faced so much trauma that this is their opportunity to grow."

"We do use the word 'love' because we do love the young people we look after. So in essence we are as much a family as we can be."

The young people are empowered to take ownership of their space and make sure they feel listened to through having meetings to decide on what equipment the home may need or to set their bed times. The children are also able to get outdoors and grow their own produce from sowing seeds through to harvesting and making and selling jams and chutneys.

Caroline says, "The end goal is for the young people to leave here having a very positive view on themselves and realising what brilliant young people they are and what positive futures they can have for themselves."

Watch a short film about Tan Y Bryn here: [actionforchildren.uk/faithFR](https://actionforchildren.uk/faithFR)

# Children and young people's outline

## Theme: growing and flourishing together

In this session, we consider what it means to flourish, based on the passage of the vine and the branches – being connected to God and one another, while also exploring the work of Action for Children and the situations the organisation is involved with, which so often include life circumstances that stop families experiencing a fullness of life.

What is your experience of life's challenges and how has it affected your faith journey? As you choose activities, carefully consider the needs and experiences of your group members and be mindful about how the discussion and theme could affect them personally. It will be helpful to keep drawing back to the passage and the centrality of our relationship with God.

The material is divided into three age groups:

**For younger children**



**For primary-aged children**



**For older children and young people**



## Children's Bible passage

Adapted from **John 15:5-12**

Let's imagine God is a gardener, and in God's garden there is a plant: a vine. The vine is rooted in the soil, and the soil is rich and nutritious, full of God's goodness. The gardener pours all his love into it, so the vine has plenty of water and food, and everything else it needs to grow well.

There are many branches on the vine. Some have fruit, some do not. God cuts off all the branches that are dry and weak, and have no fruit. Then he looks at the branches that are fruitful and cuts those branches back, so that they will bear even more fruit.

Jesus is like a vine. We are the branches. If the branches stay attached to the plant, they can draw on the goodness in the soil and produce sweet, juicy grapes.

If we stay close and connected to Jesus, like the branches of the vine, we will grow well. Jesus will give us all we need and we will produce wonderful fruit, like love, kindness and helpfulness. Jesus says, if we stay connected to him, we can ask for whatever we want, and it will be done for us.

Jesus says, 'Father God loves me, and I love you; stay in my love. If you obey me, you will stay in my love, just like I obey my Father and stay in his love. I'm telling you this so you can be joyful. This is what I want you to do, love each other just like I have love you.'

## **Gather** (for all age groups)

Play a game of 'stuck in the mud'. One person is 'it'. They chase the others round the room. If someone gets tagged, they must stand still with arms stretched wide. If someone runs under one of their arms, they are freed and can re-join the game. If the 'tagger' manages to get everyone 'stuck' they win, and the game is over.

Play a number of variations, e.g. stand still with legs open so people have to crawl through; curl up in a ball and people have to physically raise you up; shout STOP at any time and if more than half the group are 'stuck', the tagger wins. Talk about how we need to help each other freely enjoy life, but note that life can sometimes throw up a lot of challenges for people.

### **Or**

Invite everyone to stand in a circle facing inwards. Everyone puts their right hand into the middle and takes another hand, then repeat with their left, making sure it's a different person's hand they take hold of. They will now be in a complete tangle.

The group must work together to untangle themselves by going under arms, through gaps, over hands, but they mustn't let go of hands – it is possible but takes patience and teamwork. Afterwards, discuss how they needed to work together. Were they good at doing that? What difference did it make?



# For younger children



## Share the Word

### John 15:5-12

Provide dolls and teddies and include any that the children have brought with them. Sit the dolls, teddies and children together in a circle. Go round and greet each child by name, and then ask them the name of the doll or teddy they are with. Say hello to each of the dolls and teddies 'by name'. Make sure everyone feels welcomed. Tell the children that Jesus wants us to feel welcomed and loved, and he wants us to help others feel like that too. Read the **Children's Bible passage** on page 15.

## Explore & respond

### Game

Ask one child to help carry all the toys. Start passing them to the child and piling them up. When the child can't hold any more, ask the group what they could do to help. Let others come and help hold the toys too. Notice how good it is when we help each other to do hard things.

### Activity

Decorate a pot and plant a seed or, even better, repot a small plant. Explain to the group that God cares for the plants, and he cares for us.

## Talk together and talk to God

Pick one of the dolls or teddies and tell the children that they are very sad. You've tried to comfort them but it's not working. Could they help? Have some imaginary play and mention that sometimes we need extra help from each other and from God.

### Prayer activity

Make play dough hearts and say a simple prayer: Thank you, God, for loving each and every one of us.

**Amen.**

### Go with God

Look together at a picture of a grape vine, or fruit tree. Provide some cut-up fruit. Eat a piece and then pray: Thank you, amazing Lord, that you have made us to be a part of your beautiful world and to bear fruit for you. **Amen.**

### Activity to do at home

Invite a friend round this week to enjoy the connection of friendship or go for a nature walk, looking out for clues about God's love and care for us and the world.

# For primary-aged children



## Share the Word

### John 15:5-12

Read the passage on page 15 and show the children a picture of a vine with branches and fruit to help them understand the picture that Jesus was painting for his followers.

Then read the passage from the Bible. Challenge the group to listen and to do the following:

- Each time they hear the word ‘I’, point upwards – this refers to God.
- Every time they hear the word ‘you’, link arms with people either side – this refers to the listeners and now to us.

Notice together that this is how we flourish, like the healthy plant – by connecting to God and to one another.

## Explore & respond

### Game

Think together of four places where the group might meet up and connect with others, for example, school, home, church, park. Stick a sheet of paper labelled with each place near each corner of the room and point out which is which. Play music and have the group wander around the room. When the music stops, everyone chooses a corner to stand in. A leader shouts out one of the places. Anyone

who is standing in that corner is out. Repeat until there’s only one winner.

Discuss with the group what might stop these places being safe or what might lead to a young person being disconnected, for example, poverty, disability, lack of confidence, mental health issues, bullying. Explain to the group that these are the sort of issues that Action for Children help families to tackle and note how important that work is.

### Discussion and activity

Using magazines, scissors and felt tips, create a collage together on a large piece of paper showing what a flourishing (good/safe/happy/inclusive) community looks like. You can remind the group of places featured in the last game. What other places, people, activities and emotions might it include? Each child should be encouraged to include what they want, so the picture is a collection of everyone’s ideas.

Take time to look at the collage together once it’s done. Ask open questions about what they have included and why, giving space for them to add other things as you talk together. Talk about where the children would like to be in that community. Where do they think God is in that community?

## Or

Play Big Family of God, Nick & Becky Drake, Worship For Everyone song. [worshipforeveryone.com/song/big-family-of-god](http://worshipforeveryone.com/song/big-family-of-god)

This is a great song to remind us that we are all connected in God's love.

Give out copies of the lyrics and ask the children to work in groups to develop actions for a section of the lyrics, which they then teach each other. If appropriate, the group could perhaps then teach the rest of the church!

### Talk together and talk to God

What does a plant need to be healthy, and to flourish? How do we stay connected to (abide in) God? How does loving God help us to show love to others? What difference does it make?

## Prayer activity

The Bible passage reminds us that we will flourish as we stay close to God – in other words, we will live our lives in God's family and this will give us confidence in who we are. But that doesn't mean life will always be easy. Action for Children helps support children and families for whom life can be very challenging.

Provide a large outline of a vine with branches. Work together as a group to think about what people need to really flourish – live life to the full. Invite the children to write their ideas on the leaves, then gather those ideas together in a prayer, naming the things written down and asking for a special blessing from God for those who are struggling today and those who are trying to help them.

### Activity to do at home

Go for a walk and look for signs of hope and flourishing. Say a prayer of thanks for each one.



# For older children and young people



## Share the Word

### John 15:5-12

Split the Bible passage into verses 5-6, 7-8, 9-10, 11-12 and split the group into four. Ask the young people to dramatise their couple of verses – thinking about how they might use their voices and actions, then perform the passage together.

## Explore & respond

### Game

The group stands in a circle. Ask the young people to think about groups that they belong to and people they are connected with. What makes these positive connections?

The first person has a ball of wool which they unravel a bit. Holding onto the end of the wool, they throw the ball across the circle to someone else who catches it. As they throw it, they shout out a quality they like about the people or group they are thinking about. The second person repeats this – keep going as long as you can until you run out of ideas or wool. You should end up with a web of wool.

As you all keep hold, talk about how important human connection is. It is how we flourish, and it is God's design for us to flourish within. Then take a pair of scissors. Ask the group what damages connection or inclusion,

and after each idea, make a cut through the wool. Challenge them to think about things such as poverty, disability, mental health – areas where Action for Children works to make a difference.

### Discussion and activity

For this role-play activity, you need to stay in character as a chat show host. Consider your group's personal situations first to assess whether this is appropriate activity to do with them.

Ask for three volunteers to take on the guest roles and give them the scenarios. Split the rest of the young people into two audience groups: A) who believe we should help each other, and B) who believe that 'charity begins and ends at home' and we should help ourselves. Have three chairs in a row at the front with the others facing them – like a TV studio.

Once you've given a countdown welcome the 'viewers' to the show, and explain the theme for the day is about what happens when people are struggling with money. Invite your first guest on and ask them a few leading questions to help settle them in, then ask them to explain their situation. Ask for comments and questions from the audience. Once the 'teenager' has had their say,

replace them with the 'parent' and finally the 'youth worker'.

Have some questions prepared to ask the studio audience about advice they would give or what they think about what they've heard. When appropriate, thank everyone for their thoughts and comments and draw the show to a close. Only then come out of character. Leave some time to talk about any insights the young people had had during the process.

*Three guest roles:*

*I'm a young person who is struggling at school. I feel like I can't make friends easily. I can't join in with chats about latest phones or clothes as we can't afford them. I always had to make an excuse if friends were going out. They've stopped asking me now. I feel lonely and feel like there's nothing to look forward to.*

*I'm a parent of a teenager and a younger child. We're on our own and money is really tight. I'd like to work but trying to find a job that fits in with school hours and holidays is really difficult. My teenager gets angry with me because I can't give them the stuff their friends have and I'm tired of us falling out all the time.*

*I lead a local youth group at church. One of my group is obviously struggling but won't talk to me about it. I've noticed that they're not looking their best at the moment, but don't know if I should say anything. I want to take the whole group to a theme park for a day out in*

*the summer. It's going to cost £50 per person. I don't think they'll be able to afford it but should everyone miss out?*

### **Prayer activity**

Remind the group of some of the challenges that young people might face. Ask everyone to put themselves in the shoes of a young person facing significant challenges. What would they want to ask God for? Invite them to write down a line or two of a prayer as though they were that young person. Collect in the papers and then slowly read them out so they form a single prayer. Leave space for the group to pray silently for themselves too.

### **Go with God**

Using three strands of wool, make a simple plaited bracelet. Guide the group through a meditation, focusing on the three strands: 1) Thank God for being present and wanting to connect with us; 2) think about themselves – what is on their minds and in their hearts at the moment; 3) think about the people in their lives – who would they like particularly to pray for, or thank God for, right now.

### **Activity to do at home**

Visit [actionforchildren.org.uk](http://actionforchildren.org.uk) and find: five areas of support that Action for Children offer; three services near your locality; how you can fundraise for Action for Children. See if you can discover what Max Woosey did to win an honour?

## Music suggestions for Children & Youth



Preview songs on YouTube, buy online and download.

### 0-5s song(s)

*I'm meant to be right where I am Lord* (new words to the tune of: *What shall we do with the drunken sailor?*)  
I'm meant to be right where I am Lord,  
I'm meant to be right here with you Lord,  
I'm meant to be right where I am, Lord,  
learning here with Jesus.

### 5-11s

I'm going to say my prayers (CJP 379)

Go Anywhere, Rend Co. Kids on Sparkle. Pop. Rampage

We need to grow, grow, grow, grow (CJP 484)

### 12+

The More I Seek You, Kari Jobe on The First 10 Years Collection

Build My Life (Live), Passion on Worthy of Your Name (Live)

Alive In You, 7eventh Time Down on Alive In You

## A drama to consider



*Two people are sitting across a table, each with a mug of coffee.*

**Chris:** What did you make of that bit we heard the preacher go on about this morning?

**Mel:** What bit?

**Chris:** Well, 'acting justly' for a start.

**Mel:** I suppose I thought that was about being fair; you know, not cheating.

**Chris:** Oh, like not throwing yourself down in the box to get a penalty.

**Mel:** Yeah, I suppose; but maybe there's a bit more to it.

**Chris:** Oh no, sounds like we're going deep here!

**Mel:** It's not just about not cheating, it's about being unfairly treated, like... (*Chris interrupts*)

**Chris:** Like the ref giving the penalty after the dive in the box.

**Mel:** Well, I suppose you'd have one set of happy fans and one set who were far from it.

**Chris:** More like 'riot on', I'd say.

**Mel:** Hmm. What I mean is that some have all they need and some, through no fault of their own, have nothing.

**Chris:** I wouldn't say all they need – they'd like a few more goals – nothing like a trouncing!

**Mel:** It's like the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer.

**Chris:** No, they still get their pay, win or lose – footballers get thousands, you know.

**Mel:** (*firmly*) I'm not talking about football.

**Chris:** Well, you've lost me now.

**Mel:** I'm just thinking outside the box.

**Chris:** The penalty box?

**Mel:** I was thinking about some people having all they need and some not having enough!

**Chris:** Oh, right.

**Mel:** And it's got me thinking about the folks we hear about on the news who cannot make ends meet.

**Chris:** Never mind on the news – there's folk in my street.

**Mel:** Well, don't you sometimes think it's not fair?

**Chris:** I've not thought about it much to be honest.

**Mel:** Well, me neither until today, until I heard that bit about 'walking justly'.

**Chris:** I wouldn't be too hard on your self – the cost of living crisis isn't your fault.

**Mel:** That's not the point – I just feel I have to do something.

**Chris:** Don't know what – unless you win the Lottery; it's a 'roll over' tonight.

**Mel:** (*thoughtfully*) Maybe I can sign a petition.

**Chris:** What for?

**Mel:** Something to be done.

**Chris:** Half price tickets to the match – I'd sign that one.

**Mel:** No – to cut rents or raise allowances or do something to help families live better.

**Chris:** Might be worth a try.

**Mel:** Or maybe I can find a charity that helps, and give them a pound or two.

**Chris:** What'll that do then?

**Mel:** It might at least show people someone cares, and it might help to make things better.

**Chris:** Could be worth a punt.

**Mel:** (*smiling*) It might help to 'level up the playing field'.

**Chris:** (*looking at his watch*) Kick off! Let's get going. (*both drink up their coffee*)

## Safe and happy childhood



Action for Children protects and supports children and young people, providing practical and emotional care and support, ensuring their voices are heard, and campaigning to bring lasting improvements to their lives.

### Get in touch

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