

Time to shine

Dear friends,

Spring has finally arrived, which means Action for Children Sunday is just around the corner. Sadly, the world is an uncertain place at the moment. Coronavirus has thrown all our lives into crisis. We're all adapting to new ways of doing things, from keeping in touch with loved ones to spending more time indoors.

Our work to help vulnerable children and families, though, remains as important now as it's ever been. Families who were already struggling before now find themselves unable to afford food and other essentials, like nappies, cleaning products and gas and electricity. The current crisis means these families need us more than ever.

As always, your support is absolutely vital. It's been great to hear about so many churches holding their services online. We hope the materials we've created for Action for Children Sunday, enclosed with this newsletter, will help you to plan a special service for us. Action for Children Sunday is on 12 July this year, but you can hold your service whenever you like.

Our worship booklet includes prayer and hymn suggestions, as well as a central theme – our Choose Childhood campaign – to talk about. You can find lots more resources at:

actionforchildren.org.uk/methodists

Our Choose Childhood campaign highlights the challenges faced by vulnerable children and families today. Even before coronavirus hit more than four million children were in poverty. Now, vulnerable families in all our communities are at breaking point.



But by holding a service, raising money and spreading the word, you can help us reach these children.

Please get in touch with your local fundraiser if you need any help planning your service – you'll find their details on the sheet enclosed with this newsletter and on our website: actionforchildren.org.uk/find-your-fundraiser

Thank you once again for your fantastic support. It really does continue to make a life-changing difference.

God bless,

Jessica
Jessica

Head of Community
Fundraising

Karis
Karis
Head of Faith
Partnerships

Emergency Coronavirus Appeal

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 coronavirus 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, 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.

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.

Every penny you donate will help these families cover the cost of essentials like food, nappies, cleaning products, and gas and electricity.



Donate now and help us support our most vulnerable families:
actionforchildren.org.uk/how-to-help/make-a-donation/coronavirus



Step Out for Children postponed

In line with the government's advice on the coronavirus crisis, we've decided to postpone our Step Out for Children walks this year.

We are planning, however, to organise a virtual Step Out challenge. We'll be asking you to walk 15 miles in a month to raise money for vulnerable children in the UK. You can do your steps at home, in your garden or outside – it's completely up to you. And you don't have to do them all in one go!

The challenge is launching soon – keep an eye on our website for details: actionforchildren.org.uk/step-out



Secret Santa

Our Secret Santas raised more than £500,000 for vulnerable children in the UK last Christmas.

These amazing people visited our pop-up store in London, bought t-shirts and jumpers, and donated online. A huge thank you to everyone who got involved. The appeal will be back again this year so keep your eyes peeled for news.

More than 3,900

supporters got their hands on t-shirts and jumpers designed by celebrities like Stacey Solomon, Lisa Snowdon and Una Healy. Our exclusive 'safe' and 'happy' designs raised £10,000.



Mrs Hinch and
Stacey Solomon

Lisa Snowdon



Our winter wonderland-themed pop-up store opened its doors for two weeks in December.



Over 20,000

people became a Secret Santa for a vulnerable child.



Stephenson Awards celebrate success

Every year – in memory of the kindness of our founder, the Reverend Thomas Bowman Stephenson – we celebrate the wonderful achievements of young people, supporters, volunteers and staff.

Among those recognised at this year's Stephenson Awards in February was Rosemary Hambly. Rosemary is a lifelong Action for Children supporter who's raised tens of thousands of pounds for us through the Callington Methodist Church in Cornwall. David Stabler, from the Newcastle Central and East Methodist Circuit, was also nominated for our Outstanding Supporter Award. Congratulations to both!



Giving thanks...

Praying, baking, singing, running, knitting, volunteering, campaigning for change and much, much more – we're so grateful for your dedication and commitment.



District Advocate **Margaret Morgan** did a fantastic job (yet again!) collecting toys for children who use our projects.

The **Baildon Methodist Church** organised the Baildon Christmas Fair, which raised a brilliant £3,064.02.

From bucket collections to quiz nights, **Loughton Methodist Church** continued to raise money and spread the word.

The **North Chingford Methodist Church** spent most of 2019 raising money for us! Their Christmas Tree Festival in December was just one of many highlights.

The **Marlow and High Wycombe Support Group** raised a brilliant £453 from their carol singing event.

Pauline Noble and the **Aylesbury Methodist Church Support Group**'s fundraising went from strength to strength in 2019. Their Christmas craft stall was a particular success!

Sandra and John Johnson organised a fabulous big band concert in September. This event, which is a fixture in the local calendar, raised more than £2,000.

Silvia Thomas and **Ampthill Methodist Church Support Group** donated toys to the survivors of the Grenfell Tower fire over Christmas.

John Thomas and the **Aberystwyth Fundraising Committee** had a superb fundraising year, beating all previous totals.

Seren Davies braved the cold to take part in the Porthcawl Christmas Day Swim. With the support of her grandmother, Hilary, Seren raised £268 for us.

Lancashire District Advocate **Roland Hailwood** continued to raise awareness of what we do in his area. His passionate support helped to bring in £1,000 at Christmas.

Pat Nott and **Wells Green Methodist Church** raised more than £600 over Christmas. Their fantastic efforts included carol singing at Crewe station and a Christmas concert.

Shelagh and John Lawson have organised the Northwich Step Out for Children Walk for 20 years, raising more than £24,000 in the process!

Share your views

Your views really matter to us. That's why we've created The Influence Panel – our growing online community of Action for Children supporters.



Join the panel and you'll get to share your ideas, influence the decisions we make, and shape our work. You'll get closer to the action and make a very real difference.

To find out more visit: actionforchildren.org.uk/join-now



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.