



Orphan
**STRONG
FAMILY
CAMPAIGN**
Sunday

NOVEMBER 2023

FAMILY

*is God's Plan for
Children*

2023 Orphan Sunday Toolkit For Faith Leaders

November 12, 2023 Orphan Sunday and Stand Sunday

November 13, 2023 World Orphan Day



We invite you to celebrate God's heart for orphaned and vulnerable children on the second Sunday in November - known as **Orphan Sunday** and **Stand Sunday**. Orphan Sunday calls the faithful to care for orphans worldwide and Stand Sunday to stand for children and families in the U.S.

Foster Care system. Within the United Methodist Church, a grassroots movement "**A Strong Family for Every Child**," was adopted by multiple faith leaders and institutions in the UMC and UMC-related NGOs, promoting active ministry with orphaned children and vulnerable youth. **Helping Children Worldwide** is the national headquarters for the Strong Family initiative. In 2022, the initiative was introduced to UMC leaders during the UMC Leadership Institute in Kansas, and in 2023, to the UMC African Bishops at their joint meeting in Mozambique. The goal is to (1) care for the widow and orphan as the example of the most vulnerable of God's Kingdom, (2) promote family care for children as spiritual directives provided to us by God, (3) advocate for safe, permanent families of all shapes and sizes to overcome the separation of children from parents and (4) provide practical guidance for people of faith who want to engage in ministry with orphaned children and vulnerable youth to ensure ethical practices and "A Strong Family for Every Child." A similar Strong Family initiative is being introduced in the Southern Baptist Church.

THIS ORPHAN SUNDAY

As individuals, we invite you to join with Helping Children Worldwide as churches and organizations in more than 120 nations come together to observe Orphan Sunday on November 12, 2023. As Pastors, we invite you to inspire your congregation to pray for God's most vulnerable children - those living separated from the love and care of permanent family and to remember and honor those who are working to better their lives. We invite you to use the small (4 page) booklet as a toolkit to use in your observations or the QR codes below to access more resources. Share in your home devotions or incorporate the suggestions into your worship service on November 12th.

YOU CAN

- *PRAY*
- *SHARE SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS WITH YOUR FRIENDS, FAMILY & COMMUNITY NETWORKS*
- *RECOGNIZE FOSTER PARENTS IN YOUR CHURCH OR COMMUNITY WITH A SPECIAL BLESSING*
- *RECOGNIZE SOCIAL WORKERS IN YOUR CHURCH OR COMMUNITY WITH A SPECIAL BLESSING*
- *ACKNOWLEDGE THE PROBLEM IS BIG, BUT THE WAYS OF THE LORD ARE INFINITE, AND NOBODY IS EXPECTED TO DO MORE THAN THEIR SMALL SHARE OF HIS GREAT WORK.*
- *POINT THOSE WHO ARE FEELING CALLED TO DO MORE TO FIND RESOURCES ON OUR WEBSITE AT WWW.HELPINGCHILDRENWORLDWIDE.ORG/ORPHANSUNDAY*



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***OBSERVE ORPHAN SUNDAY WITH
HELPING CHILDREN WORLDWIDE***

PRAYERS, SONGS AND SIMPLE SMALL ACTS OF KINDNESS

Prayer of Hope

*For 153 million orphans in the world.
Lord, our hope is in you.
For 443,000 children with no families in the U.S.
Lord, our hope is in you.
For one child, one loving family, and until no one orphan remains.
Oh Lord, our hope is in you. Amen.*

Prayer for Vulnerable Children

Heavenly Father,

We come before you with hearts full of compassion and love for the children in this world living without families. You are the loving Father of us all, and we know that you care deeply for these precious children; lost and alone.

Lord, we pray for comfort and peace to surround these children. Let them feel your presence, even in their loneliness. Wrap your loving arms around them and remind them that they are not forgotten, for you know each one by name.

We ask that you guide them to caregivers who will be family for them, and for professionals, mentors and guardians who help them to find their way to loving and permanent homes. Bless those who work tirelessly in the foster care system, and adoption agencies. Bless those who work to help families heal so children can return to their homes when that's possible. Bless those who help children move from the street or out of orphanages into the safe and loving families they deserve and need to thrive. Grant all those who care for vulnerable children the strength and wisdom they need.

We also pray for these children's emotional and physical well-being. Heal any wounds they may carry from their past and help them find home in Your promises.

Lord, we thank you for the opportunity to pray for these children. We know that you have a plan for each of them to thrive, and we know that we must do our part to help to care for these, Your most vulnerable children. We pray that each one finds the love of a forever family, whether through adoption, fostering, or return to their own families.

In the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, we pray. Amen.

Prayer of Confession

One: Merciful God, will you please forgive us for the times we thought of our own children but not of orphaned children?

Many: For when we prayed for our children and forgot to pray for children in orphanages, foster care, and living on the streets without a loving family of their own?

One: We have looked the other way.

Many: Forgive us, God.

One: We have closed our ears to their cries.

Many: Forgive us, God.

One: We have let it be someone else's problem.

Many: Forgive us, God.

One: We are called to care for orphans and we have not.

Many: Forgive us, God.

One: God, in your mercy, invigorate your church to see, to hear, and to respond to the needs of orphaned children in our city, country, and in your world.

May our future actions reflect our repentance and gratitude for your forgiveness. By the power of your Spirit through Christ. Amen.

Prayer for Professionals

God of all power and might, hear our prayers for them and their work:

For caseworkers whose jobs sometimes seem thankless, grant refreshment by your Spirit and the rich gift of encouragement.

For judges, lawyers, and guardian ad litem, grant the conviction of the Spirit to act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly in your ways. May their compassion be evident, their knowledge grant favor, and their singular concern be to find favor in your sight.

For legislators and policy makers, grant them insight and non-partisan conviction to vote and act in the best interest of orphaned children, according to your will and ways.

For placing agencies, grant them the integrity to provide for the whole family as image bearers of yourself, worthy to be treated with dignity. May their mission to those they serve always be prioritized over the bottom line.

For all others who participate with you as you work at “setting the lonely in families” according to Psalm 68: 6. Fortify them by the truth that as much as they have done for the least, they do it to you.

May it be so in the name of the Word made flesh, Jesus our Lord. Amen.

A Prayer for Orphans to Find Family

Heavenly Father, thank You for those who care for the orphans around the world. Thank You, Father, for those who seek to ensure that every child knows the love and belonging to be found in family.

Your Word tells us that pure and genuine religion in Your sight means caring for orphans and widows in their distress and refusing to let the world corrupt us. You set the lonely in families. Your own son was ‘adopted’ by an earthly Father. Lord, guide us in shepherding Your orphaned and vulnerable children safely into the permanent, safe and loving homes they need and deserve. Amen.

Hymns from the Methodist Hymnals

Methodist Hymnal

Children of the Heavenly Father (141)

The Gift of Love (408)

Lord, whose love through humble service (581)

Jesus, United by Thy Grace (561)

Blest Be the Tie that binds (557)

O Church of God, United (547)

Open my eyes, that I may see (454)

All Who Love and Serve Your city (433)

Lord, I want to be a Christian (402)

Come, Ye Sinners, Poor and Needy (340)

Faith We Sing

Give Thanks (#2036)

God Weeps (# 2048)

Mothering God, You gave me birth (#2050)

I was there to hear your borning cry. (# 2051)

Star child (# 2095- this is Christmas one)

All Who Hunger (# 2126)

His eye is on the sparrow (# 2146)

Make me a servant (# 2176)

Lord, listen to your children praying (# 2193)

Lord of all hopefulness (# 2197)

They'll know we are Christians by our love (#2223)

Pre-recorded and Internet Resources

VIDEO Call to Action

[Answering the call of Psalm 68:6](#)

**Songs and Hymns for Strong Family for Every Child
& Orphan Sunday**

[Though I Was Born an Orphan](#)

(Eric Schumacher & David L. Ward)

[Jesus We Love You](#) (Bethel Music)

[The Table](#) (Jonathan Traylor)

[Who You Say We Are](#) (Steven Curtis Chapman)

[This is Amazing Grace](#) (Phil Wickham)

[Send Me](#) (Chris McClarney)

Global Church Pledge

"We believe God designed families as the best environment for children and young people to receive the love, belonging and protection they need in order to flourish.

Therefore on behalf of vulnerable children around the world, we commit to efforts which strengthen families, invest in family-based solutions, and combat the root causes of their vulnerability."

SMALL ACTS OF KINDNESS IN RESPONSE TO THE CALL TO CARE.

- *Send Christmas cards, thank you cards, or birthday cards celebrating your own family heroes, and to those you know who have lost parents or family members at any age, using the "family is..." downloadable graphics available on the HCW resource page on our website and G-drive.*
- *Find out who in your community works with orphans and vulnerable families here or abroad.*
 - *Honor people who do the toughest work with a special moment of praise for foster parents, social workers, volunteers, and school counselors in words of blessing, a card or a small gift or thank them quietly and privately.*
 - *Offer to become a respite care provider for a foster or adoptive parent, or to run errands for them.*
 - *Set up a "parents' night out" event with childcare at the church.*
 - *Bake a cake or take a meal to a foster family or a social worker during the holidays.*
- *Tell people about "the nation of orphans" – so many children living without one or more parents that it would be the ninth largest country in the world if they were brought together.*
- *SHARE the "Family is..." social media posts across your social networks and repost the HCW social media posts about Orphan Sunday and A Strong Family for Every Child.*
- *Sign the Global Church Pledge at globalchurchpledge.org*

Use the QR Codes on Page 1 to access downloadable materials for use in your observation, including graphics, videos, songs, and this guide. Use the QR Code below to link to our Giving Tuesday Campaign to Support Children and Strengthen Families.

