

# Resources for UNIVERSAL CHILDREN'S DAY 20 November 2012

The World Day of Prayer and Action for Children is marked on Universal Children's Day each year. The three-year theme for 2011-2013 is: STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN for which further details can be found at: <http://dayofprayerandaction.org>

Universal Children's Day was established by the United Nations in 1954. For over 55 years, governments have celebrated Universal Children's Day on the 20th of November to promote the well-being of children. This date also marks the day on which the United Nations adopted the Declaration on the Rights of the Child (1959) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). [Click here](#) for more information on this global treaty which is ratified by 193 countries.

Marta Santos Pais, United Nations Secretary General's Special Representative on Violence against Children has expressed her support for Universal Children's Day in the following statement:

"Violence takes place in all contexts, including where children are expected to enjoy a secure environment and special protection – in care institutions, in the school and within the home. Although of epidemic proportions violence against children remains hidden and socially condoned and is often perceived as a social taboo or a form of discipline. It is seldom reported and often official statistics scarcely capture its magnitude and incidence. Violence is often perpetrated by people children know and trust. This is a pattern we must reverse urgently. The protection of children from violence needs to evolve from being a concern of a few into a priority for all."

# A VIGIL WITH CANDLELIGHTING

## A GREETING

Welcome to this Prayer Vigil dedicated to ending violence against children. Throughout the world children are suffering as a result of violence. The violence may be physical or psychological or as a result of political decisions, war or poverty. On this World Day of Prayer and Action we join our prayers to those of many people all over the world who long for an end to such violence. We are conscious of our responsibility as adults to create a world fit for children and we pray for grace and determination to take action and transform children's lives.

## LISTENING TO THE VOICES OF CHILDREN

Children may be invited to compose and deliver their own messages and ideas about ending violence against children. Children may prefer to do this through writing and personally presenting messages or through drawings, poems, banner-making, movement, drama or music.

## A CHILD'S REQUEST TO THE ADULT COMMUNITY

On behalf of the children of our community we ask you to commit to ending all forms of violence against children, including corporal punishment. We want to learn to solve problems without the use of violence. We can do this by learning from your teaching, guidance and example.

## AN ADULT'S RESPONSE

An adult may be invited to respond on behalf of the church community

## A HYMN or MUSIC

## .AN ACT OF REMEMBRANCE FOR CHILDREN WHO HAVE SUFFERED VIOLENCE

LEADER: We confess with penitence the ways in which our society has neglected or abused children, remembering in particular in a time of silence, those children who have suffered violence at the hands of adults, including corporal punishment.

*A bell may be rung or a drum played softly before silence is kept*

LEADER: Let us give thanks to God for the children entrusted to our care and protection. **ALL: We give thanks for the gifts which children bring to our society and for all who nurture and protect children.**

LEADER: Creator God, we thank you for the inherent dignity of every child. **ALL: We remember with sorrow all children who are not respected and who suffer from violence.**

LEADER: We thank you for those who protect children. **ALL: We remember with sorrow all children who are not protected and who are humiliated through abuse**

LEADER: We thank you for those who listen to children. **ALL: We remember all children who have no voice, or whose concerns are not heard.**

LEADER: We thank you for those who are called to work with children.

**ALL: We remember with regret all children who have not received good quality care and support.**

LEADER: We thank you for those who help children who have suffered.

**ALL: We remember with sadness all children who have not been helped.**

LEADER: We thank you for those who model non-violent ways to resolve conflict.

**ALL: We remember with sorrow all children who have never known justice, fairness and compassion.**

LEADER: A prayer of absolution may be given

**ALL: In the name of God we commit ourselves to our children, to helping them learn well, to discover boundaries, and to explore safely, without fear of being hit or hurt by those they trust, so that we might reflect God's gentle love for them, for us and for all the world; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**

LEADER: Let us draw our prayers together in the words that Jesus taught us

### **The Lord's Prayer**

You may like to include a hymn, music, drama or mime here. Visual images may be displayed or a video such as: "*The Rights of Children – a Photo Essay*" available on UNICEF's website for the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the

Convention on the Rights of the Child:  
[www.unicef.org/rightsite/](http://www.unicef.org/rightsite/)

LEADER: In the name of God, creator and lover of us all:

Peace be with you

**All: And also with you**

A READING

Matthew 18: 1-5; 19; 13-14



### CANDLE LIGHTING CEREMONY

Candles may be arranged in a wreath around a globe or picture.



LEADER: We light these candles for children everywhere and commit ourselves to ending all forms of violence against children, including corporal punishment.

*(Optional)* WASHING OF THE  
CHILDREN'S FEET

*We wash the children's feet as a mark  
of respect for all children*

**ALL: Compassionate God  
Hear our prayers for all your children  
who are suffering through  
the unseen cruelty of others.  
Look with kindness and compassion  
on all those who are mistreated.  
When they feel abandoned, give them  
hope. When they feel unloved and  
betrayed give them courage, comfort  
and peace.  
Bless all those who care for them and  
who work to bring rescue and relief.  
Give us the courage to speak out  
against all that harms the bodies and  
minds of your children, so that love  
will triumph over fear and light shine  
in the darkness. AMEN<sup>i</sup>**

A  
REFLECTION

**You may wish to include a short  
reflection or address here.**

Jesus taught us how to make the world more compassionate and just for children; he taught about a social world in part defined by children.

In his words and actions Jesus turned the first-century view of children as the property of adults, upside down.

By blessing and laying his hands on children Jesus received children as people in their own right; he gave them dignity, status and respect.



A light from the candle wreath may be passed around from person to person

*You may wish to process from the church with lighted candles and continue the vigil outside*

A  
BLESSING

## RESOURCES

### ***The United Nations Secretary General's Study on Violence Against Children***

[www.unicef.org/violencestudy/](http://www.unicef.org/violencestudy/)

The site has links to a number of resources including the *World Report on Violence Against Children*, a photo essay *Stopping the Violence*, and a video *Youth against Violence*, with contributions from young people in India, Philippines, Romania, Venezuela and Zambia.

***A Child Friendly Report*** and Video can be downloaded at:

[www.unicef.org/violencestudy/responding.html](http://www.unicef.org/violencestudy/responding.html)

***Positive Discipline: What it is and how to do it***, by Joan Durrant, published by Save the Children, 2009. Download the manual, executive summary and a video interview with the author at:

[www.endcorporalpunishment.org/pages/news/pos-disc-manual.html](http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org/pages/news/pos-disc-manual.html)

***Parenting for a Peaceful World*** by Robin Grille

Download the video which is narrated by Ajas Swafford aged 10 years and traces the history of violent treatment of children from early times and discusses the negative effects of violence on generations of children.

[www.naturalchild.org/videos/parenting\\_peaceful\\_world.html](http://www.naturalchild.org/videos/parenting_peaceful_world.html)

### **Churches' Network for Non-violence (CNNV)**

The Churches' Network for Non-violence was formed to broaden religious support for law reform to end corporal punishment and other cruel and humiliating forms of violence against children and to challenge faith-based justification for it. CNNV aims to work with others towards developing a network of support, practical resources and information and to encourage religious communities to play an active role in the movement for reform.

**Contact us to order a free copy of:**

**ENDING CORPORAL PUNISHMENT OF  
CHILDREN - A handbook for working  
with and within religious communities.**

[info@churchesfornon-violence.org](mailto:info@churchesfornon-violence.org)