

# Ending corporal punishment of children – a handbook for worship and gatherings

**Churches' Network  
for Non-violence**



*Global Initiative to*  
**End All Corporal Punishment  
of Children**



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# Contents

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<b>Foreword</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1 Bible Study</b>	<b>11</b>
Jesus with children: what do we learn? .....	11
<b>2 Reflections</b>	<b>13</b>
Jesus was a child too .....	13
Jesus received children as people in their own right.....	14
Growing up free from violence.....	15
Discipline and discipleship .....	16
Parenting – a sacred vocation: reflections on Proverbs 13:24 .....	17
<b>3 A vigil dedicated to survivors of corporal punishment</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>4 A vigil dedicated to ending legalised violence against children</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>5 Prayers</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>6 Prayers of intercession – restore, forgive, heal</b>	<b>40</b>
<b>7 A liturgy for those who work to protect children</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>8 Opportunities to promote prohibition and elimination of corporal punishment of children</b>	<b>43</b>
Universal Children’s Day / World Day of Prayer and Action for Children .....	43
The birth of a baby.....	44
Campaigns and other actions aimed at ending domestic violence.....	45
<b>9 The Golden Rule – a key concept for teaching interpersonal respect</b>	<b>47</b>
The Golden Rule for young people: ideas for children’s assemblies and gatherings.....	48
The Golden Rule in world religions and traditions.....	52
<b>Resources</b>	<b>53</b>
The Kyoto Declaration .....	53
Putting children at the centre .....	55
A Charter for religious communities.....	57
Ending corporal punishment of children – a model statement .....	59
Online resources.....	60
<b>Notes</b>	<b>62</b>



# Foreword

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Children's right to freedom from violence is a fundamental right which the Convention on the Rights of the Child recognised 25 years ago. Since then, important progress has been made in the realisation of children's rights. Yet fear and pain continue to haunt the lives of millions of children around the world. While some forms of violence, such as trafficking or sexual exploitation, have been strongly condemned and actively combatted, other forms of violence, such as harmful practices and corporal punishment remain tolerated and condoned, and in many countries are still legitimised by law.

Corporal punishment violates children's rights and contributes to the perpetuation of violence. Achieving the prohibition and elimination of corporal punishment is a legal and ethical imperative that needs to be placed visibly in our efforts to prevent and eliminate all forms of violence against children. Religious leaders and communities command an extraordinary moral authority and influence towards ending violence against children. They demonstrate deep respect for children's dignity and fundamental rights, and play a crucial role in preventing and alleviating children's suffering, supporting their families and creating protective and caring environments for the most vulnerable children.

The contribution of religious leaders and communities is particularly precious when it comes to addressing ill perceptions of childhood, and to triggering a process of change from social and cultural attitudes that condone violent discipline of children toward respectful, caring and empowering child upbringing and education. The practice of religion, together with religious communities' daily life and work, offer multiple opportunities to safeguard children's right to freedom from violence, supporting a nurturing family environment where children can fully develop; raising awareness of the long lasting consequences of corporal punishment on children's health, learning abilities and social skills; and upholding non-violent discipline and education values. The voice and influence of religious leaders is particularly important to deconstruct arguments that justify or condone the use of violence, including corporal punishment, on the basis of culture, tradition or faith.

With strong resolve and example, religious leaders are uniquely placed to spearhead their communities' contribution towards building a world free from violence against children and a society based upon the values of tolerance, respect, compassion, fairness and solidarity. This handbook is a precious tool to facilitate this process. It presents a clear overview of the arguments behind the call to prohibit and eliminate corporal punishment of children, and it contains inspiring guidance for religious leaders and communities to take an active part in the promotion of children's rights and in the prevention and elimination of violence as a form of discipline or education.

The elimination of all forms of violence against children is a universal goal of paramount importance. Although it is an ambitious goal, it remains within humankind's reach. It is upon us to pursue it and to believe in our strength to achieve it.

*Marta Santos Pais, Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary General on Violence against Children*

# Ending corporal punishment of children – a handbook for worship and gatherings

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*“Progress towards abolishing corporal punishment is being made, but millions of the world’s children still suffer from humiliating acts of violence and these violations of their rights as human beings can have serious lifelong effects. Violence begets violence and we shall reap a whirlwind. Children can be disciplined without violence that instils fear and misery, and I look forward to church communities working with other organisations to make progress towards ending all forms of violence against children.”*

*Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, 2006*

## Introduction

Corporal punishment of children occurs in all societies worldwide. It takes place in homes, schools and institutions, care systems such as foster care and day care, religious institutions and in the wider community. In some countries children and young people can still be legally whipped or beaten as punishment for an offence. Because acceptance of corporal punishment is so widespread, politicians and others often fail to view it as a problem of equality and human rights.

Corporal punishment has for too long been a common part of tradition and culture and some Christian groups condone it as a form of discipline in the home and in schools. But corporal punishment of children breaches their fundamental rights to respect for their human dignity and physical integrity and to equal protection under the law. Physically punishing children and causing them pain is incompatible with universal religious values of respect for human dignity, justice, equality, compassion and non-violence.

In 2001 the United Nations General Assembly, acting on the recommendation of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, called for a study on violence against children.<sup>1</sup> In February 2003 the UN Secretary General appointed expert Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro to lead the first global Study to present a detailed view of the nature, extent and causes of violence against children.

Many thousands of people contributed to the Study and many participated in working groups. There were nine regional consultations involving governments and civil society. The children who took part in the consultations and provided their own views on violence and its impact on their lives, were involved at every level.

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<sup>1</sup> See Rights of the Child: Report of the Independent Expert for the United Nations Study on Violence Against Children, 29 August 2006, [www.unicef.org/violencestudy/reports/SG\\_violencestudy\\_en.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/violencestudy/reports/SG_violencestudy_en.pdf)

The Study looked in detail at the following settings where violence against children occurs:

- the home and family
- schools and educational settings
- care and justice settings
- work settings
- the community

On 29 August 2006 the Independent Expert's report was submitted to the General Assembly and the *World Report on Violence against Children* was published, accompanied by child friendly publications.



## Religious support for prohibition of corporal punishment of children

Since the publication of the *World Report* (2006), which made visible the vast scale of violence against children – including corporal punishment – globally, there has been growing religious support worldwide for the prohibition and elimination of corporal punishment of children. A special civic service was held in Coventry Cathedral in the UK to mark the publication of the *World Report* and to enlist religious support for its recommendations.

One of the most significant faith based actions supporting the recommendations of the *World Report* is “A Multi-religious Commitment to Confront Violence against Children”, known as the Kyoto Declaration. In 2006, the international organisation Religions for Peace, in partnership with UNICEF, convened a global consultation of religious leaders and experts in Toledo, Spain, to endorse the recommendations of the UN Study on Violence against Children and provide a religious perspective.

Participants from 30 countries attended from all the major world religions and a strong call was made to reject all forms of violence against children, including corporal punishment. This is explicit in the Kyoto Declaration which was formally adopted at the Eighth World Assembly of Religions for Peace in Kyoto, Japan 2006. Article 6 states:

*“We call upon our governments to adopt legislation to prohibit all forms of violence against children, including corporal punishment, and to ensure the full rights of children, consistent with the Rights of the Child and other international and regional agreements. We urge them to establish appropriate mechanisms to ensure the effective implementation of these laws and to ensure that religious communities participate formally in these mechanisms. Our religious communities are ready to serve as monitors of implementation, making use of national and international bodies to maintain accountability.”*



One of the most important parts of the Declaration includes religious leaders' acknowledgement of the seriousness of past failures to protect children from harm:

*"We must acknowledge that our religious communities have not fully upheld their obligations to protect our children from violence. Through omission, denial and silence, we have at times tolerated, perpetuated and ignored the reality of violence against children in homes, families, institutions and communities, and not actively confronted the suffering that this violence causes. Even as we have not fully lived up to our responsibilities in this regard, we believe that religious communities must be part of the solution to eradicating violence against children, and we commit ourselves to take leadership in our religious communities and the broader society."*

A copy of the Kyoto Declaration is printed in full on pages 53-54.

Pope Benedict XVI expressed remorse for the failings of the Catholic Church following revelations of the widespread physical and sexual abuse of children by Catholic priests. During a public apology in Australia, July 2008, he stated: "These misdeeds which constitute so grave a betrayal of trust, deserve unequivocal condemnation.... I ask all of you to support and assist your bishops and to work together with them in combating this evil."

During a visit to England in 2010, Pope Benedict acknowledged that the church had failed to act quickly or decisively enough to stop the abuse and prevent it from recurring. At a vigil in Westminster Cathedral he said: "Above all I express my deep sorrow to the innocent victims of these unspeakable crimes."

## **The Bible and corporal punishment**

Although growing numbers of Christians support reform to prohibit corporal punishment, there are still those who use their faith and scriptures to justify violent punishment of children. But Christians look to the example and teachings of Jesus to live their lives and there is no evidence anywhere in the New Testament that Jesus recommended hitting children, nor any suggestion that children should suffer painful punishment and humiliation. On the contrary, all the recorded encounters between Jesus and children were kind and gentle. Children were central to the new social order Jesus initiated. By blessing and laying his hands on them, Jesus received children as people in their own right; he gave them status, time, respect and dignity as in Mark 10:13-16.

*People were bringing little children to Jesus in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.*

(Mark 10:13-16 NRSV)

*At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a child, whom he put among them, and said, "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me."*

(Matthew 18:1-5 NRSV)

*"Safety and security don't just happen. They are the result of collective consensus and public investment. We owe our children, the most vulnerable citizens in our society, a life free of violence and fear."*

(Nelson Mandela)

In a joint statement in support of legal reform (2012), Christian leaders from Aruba, Guyana, Jamaica and the Cayman Islands stated:

*"Some Christian groups use their religion to justify physical punishment and may argue it is sanctioned in scriptural texts such as Proverbs 13:24: 'Those who spare the rod hate their children, but those who love them are diligent to discipline them.' But it is not appropriate to take such texts out of their ancient cultural context to justify violence towards children. As Christians, our reading of the Bible is done in the light of Jesus' teaching and example. Jesus treated children with respect and placed them in the middle of the group, as in Matthew 18:1-5: 'Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.'"*

The statement is available in full on the website of the Caribbean Coalition for the Abolition of Corporal Punishment of Children [www.endcorporalpunishmentcaribbean.org/background/religious-support.html](http://www.endcorporalpunishmentcaribbean.org/background/religious-support.html).

## The impact of corporal punishment

Corporal/physical punishment violates a child's physical, emotional and spiritual integrity and is harmful to a child's health and development. The impact of corporal punishment is often discussed in terms of physical, psychological, behavioural and societal consequences but it is difficult to separate these as they may each in turn have an impact on the other. Physical injury such as damage to a child's developing brain can have a psychological impact such as cognitive delay or emotional difficulties. Behavioural effects may lead to alcohol and drug abuse. Corporal punishment can have short- and long-term effects on development and health which not only impact on the child and family but ultimately on society as a whole, including social welfare, mental health and justice systems.

There is overwhelming evidence from research that corporal punishment is harmful to children, adults and societies. A review of more than 150 studies on the effects of corporal punishment found associations between corporal punishment and a wide range of negative outcomes.

A briefing entitled "Young children's right to an end to all violent punishment", which emphasises the importance of prohibition for young children, is available from [info@endcorporalpunishment.org](mailto:info@endcorporalpunishment.org). For a summary of research on the effects of corporal punishment, see [www.endcorporalpunishment.org](http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org).

## Defining corporal/physical punishment

In 2006, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child adopted the following definition of corporal (physical) punishment:

*“The Committee defines ‘corporal’ or ‘physical’ punishment as any punishment in which physical force is used and intended to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, however light. Most involves hitting (‘smacking’, ‘slapping’, ‘spanking’) children, with the hand or with an implement – a whip, stick, belt, shoe, wooden spoon, etc. But it can also involve, for example, kicking, shaking or throwing children, scratching, pinching, biting, pulling hair or boxing ears, forcing children to stay in uncomfortable positions, burning, scalding or forced ingestion (for example, washing children’s mouths out with soap or forcing them to swallow hot spices). In the view of the Committee, corporal punishment is invariably degrading. In addition, there are other non-physical forms of punishment that are also cruel and degrading and thus incompatible with the Convention. These include, for example, punishment which belittles, humiliates, denigrates, scapegoats, threatens, scares or ridicules the child.”*

(General Comment No. 8, 2006, on “The right of the child to protection from corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment (arts. 19, 28, para. 2; and 37, inter alia)”, para. 11)

*“Children are sick of being called ‘the future’; they want to enjoy their childhood, free of violence, now.”*

(Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, The Independent Expert who led the UN Study on Violence against Children, 2007)

## Religion and children’s rights

Corporal punishment of children breaches children’s fundamental right to respect for their human dignity and physical integrity and to equal protection under the law.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) explicitly requires states to protect children from all forms of physical or mental violence (article 19) and nearly every government in the world has ratified it. In so doing they have made a commitment to uphold the rights of children. The Convention requires states to prohibit in law all corporal punishment, in the family home and elsewhere.

In recognition of this, a number of religious leaders have emphasised the similarity between the UNCRC and religious values. They have demonstrated ways in which the Convention can provide a framework for child advocacy work and in work with children and adults.

But much violence against children is legal and widely tolerated. The persistent social and legal acceptance of corporal punishment as a form of discipline or “correction”, and its acceptance by adults and children as an inevitable part of childhood, means this form of violence goes unreported.

*“While the Holy Scripture is the basis by which we undertake our work, the Convention on the Rights of the Child will serve as a guiding framework for our advocacy.”*

(Archbishop Emeritus Njongonkulu Ndungane, former Anglican Primate of South Africa, speaking about the Millennium Development Goals’ focus on children at the (TEAM) Conference, “Towards Effective Anglican Ministry”)

*"[The Convention on the Rights of the Child is] that luminous, living document that enshrines the rights of every child without exception, to a life of dignity and self fulfilment."*

(Nelson Mandela, Statement for "Building a Global Partnership for Children", Johannesburg, 2000)

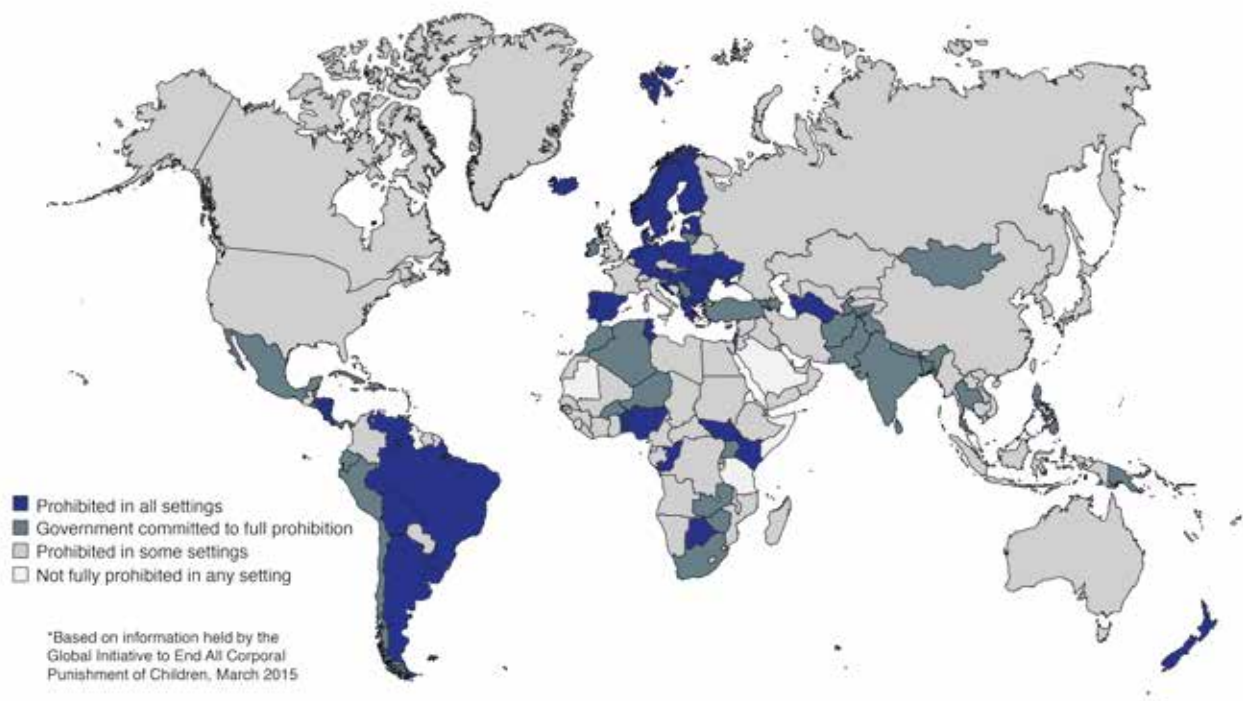
In many cultures the child is seen as an object or as property of parents but not as the subject of human rights.

Article 14 of the UNCRC confirms the child's right to freedom of religion. It respects the rights and duties of parents or legal guardians to provide direction to the child in the exercise of her or his right "in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child". But adults cannot rely on religious belief to justify imposing corporal punishment of children.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is at [www.unicef.org/crc/](http://www.unicef.org/crc/); a child-friendly version is available at <http://tinyurl.com/UNCRCChild>.

## Global Progress

There is growing progress towards universal prohibition of corporal punishment. As at March 2015, 46 states had prohibited all corporal punishment of children including in the home and family and another 47 had publicly committed to doing so. A majority of states have prohibited corporal punishment in schools (124 states), in penal institutions (132 states) and as a sentence for crime (161 states); 52 states have prohibited corporal punishment in all alternative care settings and in all day care. But there is a long way to go before all children have full legal protection from all corporal punishment. Only 9% of the world's children live in countries where they are completely protected in law from all forms of corporal punishment.



For up-to-date information about global progress see the website of the Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, [www.endcorporalpunishment.org](http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org).

## A call to action – moving forward

Urgent action is needed to end the suffering of children who endure corporal punishment and other humiliating and degrading treatment.

Religious leaders and communities have a key role to play in addressing the issue, in helping to change the social and cultural attitudes which perpetuate corporal punishment of children and in challenging those who use their faith and religious texts to justify it. They are in a unique position through their roles as teachers, theologians, preachers and leaders of worship and gatherings and as community activists to be advocates for children, to demonstrate respect for them and to lead their communities towards transforming the lives of children.

- Prohibiting corporal punishment of children calls for a radical change of culture and attitudes towards children as people with rights and dignity.
- Through their varied roles and functions, religious leaders and communities have opportunities to play a pivotal role in addressing the issue and working with others to bring about the changes and reforms needed to transform children's lives.
- Universal religious values transcend theological and denominational differences and form a sound basis for engaging with others towards ending legalised violence against children.
- Examples of positive action taken by religious leaders and their communities can be used as tools and examples to encourage others to speak out and work towards reform.



## Using the handbook

This handbook is a response to requests for further resources from those who have used the booklet *Respect Children – Resources for Worship*, published by the Churches' Network for Non-violence in 2008. It contains suggestions and ideas for Christian worship and gatherings and encourages religious communities to play an active part in the movement for the prohibition and elimination of corporal punishment and all other humiliating and degrading treatment of children. A multi-religious handbook of prayers and notes will follow shortly.

The material is organised in nine sections, each of which can be used for private or collective use. The material can be adapted for the local context or used to trigger ideas for further Bible studies, reflections or gatherings. The online version can be freely downloaded and adapted, [www.churchesfornon-violence.org](http://www.churchesfornon-violence.org).

The contents are not exhaustive. On-going contributions to the online version of this resource are warmly invited. For details please contact [info@churchesfornon-violence.org](mailto:info@churchesfornon-violence.org).

All Bible quotations in this handbook are taken from *The Holy Bible, The New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) with Apocrypha, Anglicised Edition*, 1989, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995.

A *child* is defined in this handbook as in article 1 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child – every human being under 18.

## What Christians can do towards ending corporal punishment of children

- Do not use corporal punishment in parenting our own children
- Speak out about the harmful effects of corporal punishment. Explain why the legality and practice of corporal punishment is incompatible with Christian values and the teachings of Jesus
- Place children at the centre of the community, as in Matthew 18:1-5 and Matthew 19:13-15
- Enable the meaningful participation of children as equal partners in the life of the religious community and make provision for their voices and opinions to be heard
- Ensure religious texts and scriptures used in worship promote respect for children and do not condone violence against children
- Plan vigils and events dedicated to ending legalised violence against children. Involve children in a meaningful way
- Use opportunities presented during marriage preparation, baptisms and other events to promote prohibition and offer support and resources on positive non-violent discipline
- Link the issue of corporal punishment and the need to prohibit it with campaigns to end domestic violence
- Ensure child protection and safeguarding policies explicitly denounce corporal punishment
- Encourage the church community to actively support law reform at [www.endcorporalpunishment.org](http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org)
- Work with others, including inter-faith councils and NGOs, towards prohibition and elimination of all corporal punishment.

For more information, see [http://churchesfornon-violence.org/wp/?page\\_id=152](http://churchesfornon-violence.org/wp/?page_id=152)

# 1 Bible Study

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## Jesus with children: what do we learn?

### Story: Matthew 18:1-5 and 19:13-15

Read the passages and then leave a full two minutes of silence for quiet reflection. Then read them again.

### Starter

What were your happiest experiences as a child? Why did you choose those? What other emotions do you associate with those times, e.g. security, unconditional love, excitement, anticipation, etc?

### Study

1. Jesus tells the disciples they have to become child-like (not childish) if they are to enter the kingdom of heaven (18:3). What characteristics of children was he probably referring to (in addition to humility, which he mentions in 18:4)?
2. Do a reality check: did you and your children (if you have them) display those characteristics you've just mentioned in answer to question 1? Do we sometimes sentimentalise children in our culture, and if so, how?
3. What do you think "entering the kingdom of heaven" actually means? Is it present or future? Is it something we achieve or something we receive? How will we know we're on track?
4. Jesus says that whoever receives a child in his name, receives him (18:5, like the parallel passage in Matthew 25). How does society "receive" children today – both well and badly? Are we making progress?
5. Children not only "enter" the kingdom of heaven; here they seem to own it (19:14, the kingdom of heaven "belongs" to them). What are we doing and thinking when we work to end corporal punishment of children? Do you think of this as an issue of human rights or of nurture or compassion, or of justice or equality, or of corporate self-interest, or what?

### New stories

How will you act, think or pray differently as a result of this session, i.e. how will you start to write a new story?

## Prayer

Think of two or three children you know and picture them in your mind's eye, noticing their features, their faces, their energy. Think about what these children most need in life now, and pray for them in silence.

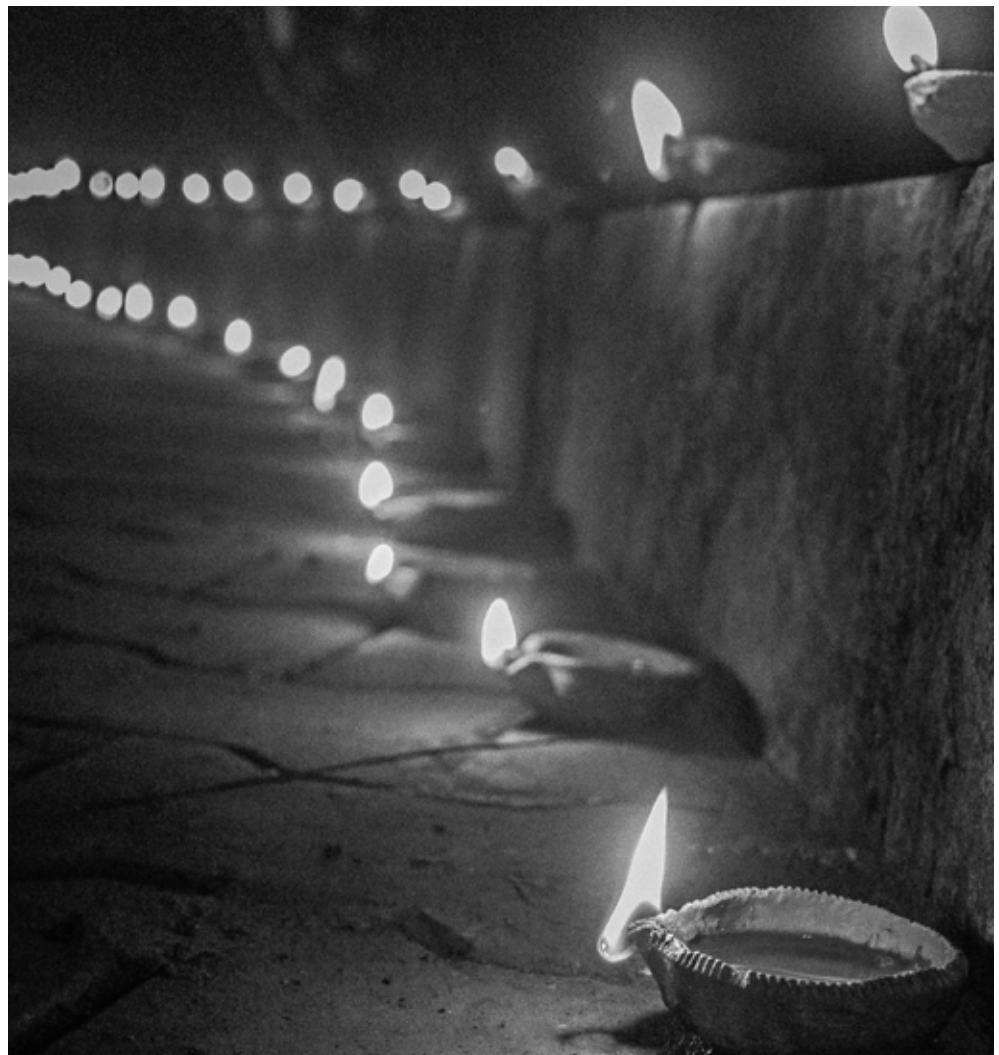
Now think of some children in difficulties, those you know or those you can imagine, perhaps far away. Think of their life situation and needs and, if possible, pray briefly out loud for them. (One way of doing this is to have a world map on the floor or table, surrounded by night-lights, and to move those night-lights onto that part of the map where the children are, accompanied by minimal words of explanation and prayer.)

*Choose a formal prayer from the handbook (see pages 35-39)*

## The Lords Prayer

Finish by repeating Matthew 19:14-15 – Jesus said, “Let the children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.” And he laid his hands on them and went on his way.

*John Pritchard*





## 2 Reflections

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### Jesus was a child too

*"I began to think about how easily we sing of God incarnate in the Virgin's womb and worship the baby of Bethlehem, and how rarely we reflect on the divinity of the growing boy and its implications for our treatment of children."*

You were a child too Lord and we know so little of your  
upbringing;  
a child and our Lord and our God.  
Born a child and yet a King – it seems easy to think of you at  
Christmas  
but we fail to recognise you in the growing child.  
Help us to treat children we know and care for with the  
reverence we owe to you  
for you are incarnate in the children we serve.

Reflect on the key points for you in this passage

Think of the following questions from the perspective of your everyday roles at home and at work – as neighbour, parent, teacher, community leader, student, child, etc

- How do we recognise Christ in every child?
- How does the media influence our view of children?
- What are the implications of the birth of Jesus for the way the church relates to children throughout the year – not just at Christmas?

*Conclude with a prayer from the handbook  
(see pages 35-39)*

*John Packer*



## Jesus received children as people in their own right

Christians believe human beings are created in the likeness and image of God, and they look to the example of Jesus to live their lives.

All the recorded encounters between Jesus and children were kind, gentle and respectful. Children were central to the new social order Jesus initiated. By blessing and laying his hands on them Jesus received children as people in their own right; he gave them status, respect, time and dignity (Mark 10:13-16).

Jesus taught us how to make the world more compassionate for children; he also 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.

Reflect on the key points for you in this passage

- How do we demonstrate respect for children as people, in the church and community?
- What steps do we need to take to raise the status of children?
- How do we take the lead from children?

Conclude with a prayer from the handbook (see pages 35-39)



*Child speaking at 2008 launch of World Vision Lebanon national campaign to protect children from violence in the home and other settings*

## Growing up free from violence

Children are among the most vulnerable people in our society. It seems curious, therefore, that adults should resort to smacking them as a means to correct perceived bad behaviour; it is demeaning to both child and adult. Whatever the motive, smacking is an aggressive act which only serves to model violence as either a tool to resolve dispute or as a punitive measure, and this is hardly a pattern of behaviour that we would wish children to reproduce as they grow into adults.

Children have a right to feel safe and secure in their upbringing; not only physically safe, but emotionally safe too, and adults have the moral responsibility to nurture children without recourse to actions that in any way diminish the child. This moral responsibility has to be shaped by the love of God in each one of us.

Reflect on the key points for you in this passage

- How does the church community support parenting without smacking?
- How does the church help children to feel safe and secure?
- What more should the church do?

*Conclude with a prayer from the handbook (see pages 35-39)*

*Colin Bennetts, 1940-2013*



## Discipline and discipleship

Discipline is often associated with punishment, including corporal punishment. But the word discipline comes from the same Latin root as disciple – *discipulo*. Discipline in the New Testament sense is closely related to discipleship and Jesus' relationship with his disciples. The disciples were open to Jesus' teachings and guidance because they trusted, believed and admired Jesus and knew that his love for them was unconditional. These are all components of the parent-child relationship.

In the context of parenting, positive non-violent discipline is concerned with teaching and guiding children by adult example. It is based on an understanding of children's needs and a deep respect for their inherent human dignity. Children learn from the behaviour and interactions of those around them and they respond to the love, warmth and encouragement of those who care for them.

Positive non-violent discipline focuses on teaching children skills appropriate to their age and development, such as how to manage behaviour and deal with emotions. It involves helping children to solve problems without the use of force. Positive discipline is also concerned with the long-term. It teaches children life-long skills of self-discipline and prepares them for independence and caring for others.

Reflect on the key points for you in this passage

- Discuss the implications of discipline and discipleship for the church
- How does positive non-violent discipline affect society?
- What are the opportunities for promoting positive non-violent discipline in the church and community? (See pages 60-61 for links to resources on positive, non-violent discipline.)

*Conclude with a prayer from the handbook (see pages 35-39)*



## Parenting – a sacred vocation: reflections on Proverbs 13:24

Several years ago I was asked for a public comment as a Christian leader in New Zealand, on the question of whether the corporal punishment of children could be justified from the Bible. I said that Proverbs 13:24 had often been enlisted to support the hitting of children with a rod or broom or some other instrument of pain. The direct quote from Proverbs 13:24 is: “Those who spare the rod hate their children, but those who love them are diligent to discipline them.”

I went on to say that this verse comes from an ancient Near Eastern culture that either used physical discipline as a way of guiding older children from destructive pathways, or as some other means of direction giving. In Egyptian the word for education was supported by a hieroglyph which showed a striking man or arm. However, this information cannot be taken uncritically into the whole Hebrew corpus of the Bible in its Jewish context, as we shall see. Also, the striking of a child can now be shown to be counterproductive to learning and to personal self-respect and may create a burning resentment that can override a much more enlightened and positive approach to a child’s negative or dangerous behaviour.



So what can we make of this proverb as part of our biblical teaching? No one would dispute the central theme of the chapter as a whole; that sacred wisdom upholds us and prevents us from falling into sin or running into danger. “Wisdom is with those who take advice” (Proverbs 13:10) and “The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life” (Proverbs 13:14). The deeper issue in this chapter witnesses to forms of restorative love, as a form of wisdom and guidance. This can involve tough love also, which is the principle behind Proverbs 13:24. So we can embrace the essence of this chapter as Christians today; but what do we make of the point about striking with a rod in verse 24?

As with all holistic biblical hermeneutics and exegesis of the Word of God, we need to apply the wisdom, person and behaviour of Christ to all aspects of our biblical theology. Jesus is the Living Word of God, the Bible is the Word of God written. What did Jesus say in this area? We know that he treated children with great respect and tenderness. In Mark 9:36, Jesus is shown taking a little child and placing the child among the disciples and saying “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me”. And in Mark 10:14 Jesus says “Let the children come to me; do not stop them, for it is to such as these that the Kingdom of heaven belongs”. He also says in Mark 9:42, Luke 17:2 and Matthew 18:6 that we are not to put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in him, because it would be better for such a person to be thrown into the sea with a millstone around their neck.

This great concern for the spiritual formation of children and the care that Jesus shows children in a crowd, speak of a great affinity with children and an implicit gentleness and respect, I would argue.

It is of great significance that this teaching tradition is found in all three synoptic gospels, as a deep and abiding aspect of Jesus’ attitude and behaviour in this area – clearly remembered and passed down and finally written in the Markan, Lukan and Matthean communities of faith, spread apart as they were. We are standing on part of the bedrock of Jesus’ teaching here.



Would Jesus have struck a child; would he have beaten a child with a rod? Would Jesus have taken Proverbs 13:24 as his only source of wisdom and taken it to mean that a blow with a rod was his only biblical option when dealing with the discipline of children? I don't think he would have done. Jesus identified with the tradition of the good shepherds of Israel who held the lambs in their arms and gave of themselves until they had brought all the flock along with an abiding, searching and enduring love to the right paths and to safety. We see this in John 10:11: "I am the good shepherd." This good shepherd is life giving; the "rod" of Jesus, like his yoke, is firm, but gentle.

There is no wishy-washy, "anything goes" principle here; the shepherd wants life giving, nourishing green pastures and streams of living waters for the lambs and the sheep and he knows the way to them. The shepherd accompanies the flock on the journey as a deeply interested companion. The lamb is not beaten or struck; rather the lamb is guided with strength and clarity by the crook end of the staff around its neck or back foot, or re-directed with the length of the rod itself. This is the rod and the staff of the good shepherd as imaged in Psalm 23:4, "Your rod and your staff they comfort me". "They comfort me"... The rod and the staff are for "putting strength in". This is the literal meaning of the word comfort. The rod and the staff are for guidance, for correction and to move a lamb or sheep in the paths they should go, rather than to deliver physical pain as a punishment. A Hebrew shepherd's crook is not for striking, it is for strong guidance. With wisdom from the book of Proverbs, the Psalms and the Gospels, it can be argued that both testaments of the Bible are needed to approach the discipline of children, and both have something crucial to say to this sacred vocation.





Children need to be clearly and firmly challenged when they are about to hurt themselves or others, and in a memorable way, but not with the perpetuation of something that comes from the same source of the violence or disrespect we want to discourage. Responding to a child's misdemeanour with the aggressive behaviour which we don't want the child to show towards other children, is counterproductive. It is also now clearly unsupportable in terms of contemporary child psychology. The carrot, not the stick; the incentive, not the negative self-concept; a loving role model, not vengeance-bringer, are much more likely to deliver wisdom and to foster sacred wisdom in the souls of children. Jesus is God's wisdom incarnate; we are his followers. We follow him because we know he leads us all towards living water, to green pastures, and to restoration of the soul. The debates around the discipline of children and violence towards children need to be measured by the rod and staff of Jesus. This is wisdom.

- What are the key points for you in this reflection?
- Reflect on parenting as a sacred vocation. What are the implications for the church?
- Reflect on the importance of reading the Bible in the light of Jesus' teaching and example

*Conclude with a prayer from the handbook (see pages 35-39)*

*David Moxon*



# 3 A vigil dedicated to survivors of corporal punishment

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## Order of Service

### THE GREETING

Welcome in the name of Christ; grace and peace be with you

**And also with you**

A Taizé chant or a hymn may be sung

“The Kingdom of God is justice and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit

Come, Lord, and open in us the gates of your kingdom.”

[www.taize.fr/spip.php?page=chant&song=499&lang=en](http://www.taize.fr/spip.php?page=chant&song=499&lang=en)



## THE GATHERING

We gather to remember all those whose childhoods have been blighted by violence in homes, schools, religious organisations, churches and in the wider community.

Corporal punishment of children has for too long been a part of our culture. Whether disguised as discipline or sanctioned by the state, corporal punishment of children is contrary to the teachings of Jesus who treated children with gentleness, compassion and respect.

Countless vulnerable children have suffered as a consequence of this common-place violence and many adults bear the marks of that suffering today, including in their relationships with others and in the parenting of their own children.

We dedicate this vigil to all those who have suffered violence in childhood and we remember all whose pain has been forgotten or ignored. We know that words of sorrow alone cannot atone for the suffering of those whose memories of childhood are scarred by ill-treatment. For many, the emotional trauma and humiliation of corporal punishment has had profound and lifelong effects.

As we gather in this place let us stand in solidarity with all who have suffered harm and let us work with others to prohibit corporal punishment of children.

*A hymn or music*



## PRAYERS

We remember in these prayers those who have suffered corporal punishment and all forms of violence at the hands of others

### **God help and guide us**

Direct us in all our actions to protect children from cruel and humiliating treatment

### **God help and guide us**

Help us to be messengers of hope and peace for people in need

### **God help and guide us**

Give us grace to follow Christ's teachings and example and to treat all people with respect and compassion

### **God help and guide us**

Grant us wisdom to understand children, to listen to them and learn from them and to respond appropriately to their concerns

### **God help and guide us**

Give us strength to speak out boldly against all injustice and discrimination

### **God help and guide us**

**God our comforter  
who has given us in Jesus Christ  
a light that cannot be extinguished,  
open our eyes to your healing grace  
and let the warmth of your Spirit burn within us  
as we put our trust in you,  
through Jesus Christ our Lord  
Amen**



## OPTIONAL PRAYERS

### **A prayer for those who have been abused in churches and religious institutions**

God of peace, we remember with sadness the many children who have suffered violence at the hands of those who profess to serve you in churches and religious communities. Many children have been ignored and betrayed through denial and silence. Instead of protecting vulnerable children, perpetrators have sought ways of protecting themselves and the institutions they represent.

Give wisdom to those in power. Give them guidance to use their authority to protect the children entrusted to them. Give them strength to bring to justice and repentance all those who have committed crimes of violence against children. Spread your healing wings over all who have suffered violence and grant them peace, comfort and hope. Amen

### **For those who have suffered the effects of abuse in childhood**

God of love, we want to shed the burden and pain of a violent childhood and to feel your healing power, but sometimes the load seems too heavy to bear. The fear and mistrust we learned as children has sometimes tainted our adult relationships. We have often lacked the strength and courage to seek help and we have denied the damaging effects of our own experiences of being hit and hurt as children. Give us strength, hope and resolve to seek help to overcome our adversities so that we may live life in all its fullness. Amen

### **For survivors of childhood violence**

Eternal God, help our religious communities to create conditions of trust and openness where survivors of childhood violence can safely share their anxieties and struggles. Give grace, sensitivity and wisdom to all who minister to them. Alleviate the fear and distress of those who suffer in silence and empower and comfort those who are fearful of speaking out, so that perpetrators may be brought to justice and repentance. Amen

### **A prayer of repentance for those who were abused and who now mistreat others**

God of justice we bring before you all those who have themselves endured childhood violence and who now abuse, bully and mistreat others. Open their eyes to see the harm their actions cause and lead them to repentance. Shine your light on their troubled thoughts and memories and give them inner healing and strength to reform their lives and seek help to break the patterns of violence. Amen

### **A prayer of repentance for parents who have physically punished children**

God our guide and helper we ask forgiveness for those of us who have physically punished our children. We look back on our actions with sadness and regret. We are deeply sorry for the pain, fear and bewilderment we have caused our children and for betraying their love and trust. As parents we are our children's protectors, guides and role models. Grant us grace to repair our broken relationships and commit ourselves to love and nurture our children. Amen

### **For those who were abused as children and find themselves victims of interpersonal violence**

God of life we pray for those whose childhoods have been overshadowed by violence and who are now victims of violence from those closest to them. Many feel powerless and live in constant fear of the threat of violence in their own homes and in their personal relationships. Open our eyes to recognise the silent suffering of others so that they may receive comfort, protection, justice and hope. And help us to break cycles of violence so the path of healing may begin. Amen

### **For those who work with children and families**

Transcendent God, hear our prayer for those who work with children and families in faith-based or secular settings. Give them strength to be advocates for children, courage and resolve to speak out against mistreatment, and the wisdom and understanding to be facilitators of healing and enlightenment. Amen

*Additional prayers can be found on pages 35-39*

*A hymn or music*



## THE READING

God is love and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgement, because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because he first loved us. Those who say, "I love God", and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

(I John 4: 16-21 NRSV)

*A hymn or music*

*A short address may be given*

Living God, send love into lives ruled by fear.  
Heal those who are wounded by violence.  
Speak gently to those troubled by painful memories  
and sow the seeds of hope and peace in our hearts.



# SILENCE IS KEPT

## CANDLE LIGHTING

*Candles are lit for all who have suffered from the violent actions of others*

*Leader: We light this candle for all children who have suffered the pain, injustice and humiliation of corporal punishment and all other forms of violence.*



### **Lord have mercy**

*Leader: May this light shine for all those who have carried painful memories of childhood violence into adulthood*

### **Lord have mercy**

*Leader: We light this candle for those who bear the pain of broken relationships*

### **Lord have mercy**

*Leader: We light this candle for all those who have been silenced and intimidated by people in power and left to carry the burden of violent treatment*

### **Lord have mercy**

*Leader: We light this candle for all who suffer and we pray that you will free them from fear and strengthen them to face the future with confidence and hope*

### **Lord hear our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord**

## BLESSING

May Christ's light be with us,  
around us,  
within us and before us,  
now and always.

May God protect us and keep us  
and give us comfort and hope to live our lives in peace.  
Amen.



## 4 A vigil dedicated to ending legalised violence against children

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Religious vigils are outward symbols and demonstrations of people's faith with the purpose of transforming situations.

This vigil invites broad participation and can be adapted for the local community. It can be held as an ecumenical event to which civic dignitaries are invited and there are opportunities for participation of people of all ages. Those taking part may prefer to present a message in the form of an address or artistically, through dance, drama, mime or another medium.

*“How we treat those who are weak and defenceless is a marker of a civilised society.... Violence, both deliberate and directed and casual and unthinking and directed towards children especially, and by extension the disruption to the life of family and society, violence, especially when it has the sanction of the state and the law behind it, is pandemic. Our hope is that whatever small steps we take such as this vigil – they are steps along the way to eliminating violence against children....”*

(The Rt Rev Wyn Evans, Bishop of St Davids, speaking at a vigil dedicated to “Ending Legalised Violence against Children” at St Davids Cathedral, Wales, UK, February 2014)





# Order of Service

*A hymn*

## THE GREETING

*Leader:* Welcome to this Prayer Vigil dedicated to ending legalised violence against children. Throughout the world children are suffering as a result of corporal punishment and other cruel and degrading treatment. We come before God conscious of our responsibility to create a world fit for children. Let us commit ourselves to listening to children's views and learning from them. And let us pray for grace and determination to take action and to work with others towards prohibition and elimination of all corporal punishment of children.



## LISTENING TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

*Children may be invited to deliver their own messages and ideas about ending violence against children. They may prefer to do this in the form of a short address or with banners, drama and dance, music or verse.*

*A hymn or music*

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

*Leader:* Let us give thanks to God for the contributions which children make to our society and for all those who nurture and protect children. Let us confess with penitence the ways in which our society has neglected or abused children, remembering in particular, in a time of silence, all children who have suffered corporal punishment and other cruel and humiliating forms of violence at the hands of adults.

## SILENCE IS KEPT

*A muffled bell may be tolled*

## PRAYER

*Optional:* The Kyrie may be said or sung after each prayer

**Kyrie, kyrie eleison. Kyrie, kyrie eleison / Lord have mercy**

*Leader:* Let us give thanks to God for the children entrusted to our care and protection

Creator God, we thank you for children, for their inherent dignity and for the gifts they bring to our society.

**We remember with sorrow those children who are not respected and who suffer from violence.**

*Leader:* We thank you for those who protect children.

**We remember with sorrow all children who are not protected and who are harmed and humiliated through violence and neglect.**

*Leader:* We thank you for those who listen to children and learn from them.

**We remember with sadness all children who have no voice or who are not heard.**

*Leader:* We thank you for those who work to uphold children's rights.

**We remember with sadness all children who are not informed of their human rights.**

*Leader:* We thank you for those who care for children and help them to understand their value.

**We remember with sorrow all children who have not received good quality care, love or affirmation.**

*Leader:* We thank you for those who help children who have suffered from acts of violence.

**We remember with sadness all children who have not been helped adequately or appropriately.**

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

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

**Kyrie, kyrie eleison. Kyrie, kyrie eleison / Lord have mercy**

*A prayer of absolution may be given*

**All: In the name of God, our nurturing and protecting mother and father, we commit ourselves to our children – to helping them to learn well, to discover boundaries and 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.**

*A hymn, music or dance*

## THE READING

The disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” He called a child, whom he put among them, and said, “Truly I tell you, unless you become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Whoever becomes humble like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.” Then little children were being brought to him in order that he might lay his hands on them and pray. The disciples spoke sternly to those who brought them; but Jesus said, “Let the little children come unto me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.” And he laid his hands on them and went on his way.

(Matthew 18: 1-5; 19: 13-15 NRSV)

*A hymn, music or dance*

## AN ADDRESS OR REFLECTION



## PRAYERS OF DEDICATION

*People may gather and light the candles on a candle wreath or stand as an act of dedication.*

*Young person:* On behalf of the children of our community we ask you to commit to working with others towards banning corporal punishment and all other forms of violence against children. We want to learn to solve problems without violence. We can do this by learning from your teaching, guidance and example.

*Adult:* We light these candles to remember children everywhere and we commit ourselves to working with children and others to ban corporal punishment and all other forms of violence against children. If we want a just and peaceful world we must treat children and young people with gentleness, compassion and respect.

**All: Loving God you chose to enter this world quietly, humbly and as an outcast.**

**Hear our prayers for all your children who are suffering through the unseen cruelty of others.**

**Look with kindness and compassion on all 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 them rescue and relief.**

**Give us the courage to speak out against**

**all that harms the bodies and minds of children,**

**so that love will triumph over fear and light shine in the darkness.**

**For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, who took children in his arms and blessed them**

**Amen.**

Eternal God our Creator, we pray for all children and young people who endure violence in their homes. We pray that we may all work together to support the families in our communities so that all children may grow up in an atmosphere of compassion, loving-kindness, encouragement and non-violence.

Eternal God: **hear our prayer.**

Compassionate God, we remember all children in the world affected by the violence of poverty, hunger and armed conflict. Fill us with love for all human beings and let us respect the dignity and human rights of one another. Give us grace to resolve our differences without the use of force.

Compassionate God: **hear our prayer.**

God of justice, we pray for strength of purpose to work in solidarity with others towards eliminating corporal punishment. Give us insights to read

and interpret our scriptures and religious teachings to promote non-violence and peace.

God of justice: **hear our prayer.**

God of love, we pray that we may promote a culture of respect for the inherent dignity of all children and young people. Help adults to teach and guide children by their own example so that we may develop mutual respect; for respect for one another is a key to living without violence.

God of love: **hear our prayer.**

God of peace we pray that adults will create environments where children and young people are partners with adults in speaking out, resolving conflict, and creating peace.

God of peace: **hear our prayer.**

*From the prayer: "Let your light shine in the darkness" by Martin Wharton*

*Leader:* Let us draw our prayers together in the words Jesus taught us.

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

*A hymn, song, music or dance*

## THE WASHING OF FEET

We wash the feet of the children as a symbolic mark of respect for children everywhere

*During the washing of feet music may be played or a chant or hymn may be sung*



# THE PEACE

God is love and those who live in love live in God and God lives in them

May the peace of God be with you

## **And also with you**

*Members of the congregation may greet each other with a sign of peace, most commonly a handshake.*

*A hymn*

*Candles may be lit from the candle wreath and passed around as people process from the building to hold a silent vigil outside.*

*A blessing*

May the God of peace be with us  
May the God of justice enfold us  
May the God of love surround us  
May God's everlasting light show us the way  
Amen.

## **Resources**

- Taize Chants at [www.taize.fr/en\\_article10308.html](http://www.taize.fr/en_article10308.html)
- Hymns can be downloaded from [www.hymnary.org](http://www.hymnary.org). Suggested titles:
  - Here I am Lord / I, the Lord of sea and sky* (Dan Schutte)
  - I sing a love that sets all people free* (June Boyce Tillman)
  - When I needed a neighbour* (Sydney Carter)
  - One more step along the world I go* (Sydney Carter)
  - A new commandment I give unto you* (composer unknown)
  - For the beauty of the earth* (W. H. Monk)
- Pictures can be projected during the service or a video could be shown instead of an address. See page 60 for suggestions

# 5 Prayers

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## The Church – a shelter and a refuge

Almighty God, whose name is love, we ask you to reach out in tender compassion to all the hurting people and places of your world.

We recall the words of the Psalmist, who said

*“To you Lord have I come to shelter: let me never be put to shame  
O deliver me in your righteousness: incline your ear to me and be  
swift to save.*

*Be for me a rock of refuge, a high fortress to defend me:  
for you are my high rock and my stronghold”*

(Psalm 31: 1-3)

We pray that your Church may be like you, a shelter and a refuge.

May our buildings and communities be safe places for those who put their trust in us.

Help us to be wise and careful, especially in our dealings with the vulnerable and in responding to those who have been scarred by the experiences of life.

We pray that, wherever there has been harm, we may be instruments of your healing, wholeness and hope, so that all might know the redemptive newness of life won for us upon the cross by your Son, our Saviour and Lord. This we ask, in the name of Jesus Christ, who embraced suffering and death to free us from their power. Amen

*Thabo Makgoba*



## **The gift of childhood**

We thank you God for the gift of childhood,  
for its own particular wisdom and for its glimpses  
into the wonder of our world and the promise of eternity.

We pray for a society that so often steals childhood;  
that takes away its hopes and dreams  
and does violence to the innocent.

As in the manger child we gaze upon the face of God;  
so in each and every child may we recognise the face of Christ,  
cherishing the miracle.

*Nigel McCulloch*

## **The privilege of bringing up children**

Gracious God

We come to you in gratitude  
for the privilege and responsibility of bringing up children,  
with all their capacity for wonder and delight.

We come to you also in sorrow  
that often our children receive so much less from us than they  
deserve,  
even to the point of abuse.

We pray that you will move in the hearts and minds  
of parents, teachers, law-makers  
and all people everywhere an urgent desire for respect for our  
children  
and peace for our families.

Give us humility to learn better ways than the ways of violence,  
and more creative paths than those of power.

For what we have received in our children make us truly  
thankful.

And for what we have got wrong  
with our children make us truly  
penitent.

Through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen

*John Pritchard*







## **Speak out for children**

God of Peace

Forgive us for the times  
when disrespect of children leads to abuse.

As you cared for children,  
may we who have responsibility for children  
value, love and care for each child entrusted to us.  
Open our eyes to see abuse where it is happening;  
open our lips to speak out for children;  
open our minds to wrestle with the issues  
of nurturing young people;  
open our hearts to the way of peace.

In the name of our loving Saviour Jesus Christ.

Amen

*Elizabeth Welch*

## **Living without fear**

Living God and strong protector  
Send love into lives ruled by fear,  
Heal those who are wounded by violence,  
Speak gently to those troubled by painful memories  
And sow the seeds of hope and peace in their hearts.  
Amen

## **Valuing and respecting children**

Loving God

May we value and respect each child entrusted to us.

Open our eyes to the mistreatment of children

Open our lips to speak out for children

Open our ears to listen to children

Open our minds to understand children

and take the lead from them.

May we strive to be an example for children  
in the ways of compassion and non-violence.

*Lorraine Olden*

## **Help us to find new ways**

Lord God you made all things new

In Jesus we see creative responses to old questions.

When we seek to change our children's behaviour,

When we seek to attract our children's attention

Help us to find a new way to be loving and creative.

Help us to find Jesus' way of non-violence.

Amen

*Bill Young*

## **Unconditional love**

Loving God

We thank you for children, created in your own image.

Help us to nurture our children

and help them to reach their potential.

Help us protect children from all forms of harm and let them  
discover in you a love that will never leave them.

Receive our prayer through Jesus Christ our Lord  
who gave us the perfect example of unconditional love  
and who respected and loved all children.

*Elizabeth Penlington*



## **For our law-makers**

Creator God, you have called us to work  
for true justice in our communities  
and to be messengers of hope to all who are oppressed.  
Guide our law-makers  
in the paths of truth, wisdom and compassion.  
Inspire them with a fresh vision and sense of urgency  
to work in unity to prohibit violent punishment of children.  
We pray that all children may live their lives  
free from the threat of violence.  
Amen



## **For the protection of children**

God our creator we thank you for the gift of life  
with all its wonder and possibilities.  
We lift up to you all children who are deprived of the joy of living  
because of violence and harsh treatment  
from those who should love and care for them.  
We pray that in your power  
you will transform the minds of men and women  
to end violence against children.  
May all children and adults enjoy  
the creative and joyful relationships you intend for them  
In the name of Jesus Christ.  
Amen

*Vivian Kityo*

## **For religious leaders**

God of love, we bring before you all those who are called  
to serve in religious communities.  
May they use their power and influence wisely  
to promote a culture of respect for children and young people  
as equal partners in the life of the community.  
And may they lead us in reading and interpreting religious texts  
to promote non-violence and peace.  
Amen



## 6 Prayers of intercession – restore, forgive, heal

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Creator God whose Spirit hovered over the chaos and brought forth peace, grant your restoring presence to every home and family where relationships are shaped by fear, frustration and hurt. May the chains of the past be broken by your loving presence.

### **Come Living God, restore, forgive and heal**

Draw near to all parents as they seek to raise their children amidst the many pressures placed upon them. We pray for mothers or fathers who because of their circumstances have to raise their children on their own with little support, relief or encouragement. Too easily frustrations and angst take over where time and space are in short supply. Grant your calm to all parents that they may feel able to reflect carefully and act lovingly in each situation.

### **Come Living God, restore, forgive and heal**

Although we like to feel we are independent people, all too often we are prisoners to the past, its way of doing things and our memories and experiences of it. Lord teach us to live and act not chained to the past but liberated to the present; so that in each moment we might find the opportunity to respond creatively and lovingly to the needs of our children.

### **Come Living God, restore, forgive and heal**

Loving God we cannot bring peace to our world by bombing it to pieces and we can never deal with the issues of violence and rebellion by being violent and rebellious in return. Teach us the way of Jesus so that what we are able to profess with our lips may be lived out in our lives. May our lives be driven by love and willingness to share rather than by our frustrations and anger.

### **Come Living God, restore, forgive, heal**

Lord make each one of us a channel of your peace, a testimony to your love and agents of your healing presence

In Christ's name

Amen

*Stuart Jennings*

# 7 A liturgy for those who work to protect children

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## Opening

In the name of God, Creator and Lover of the world  
Peace be with you

**All: And also with you**

Loving God

We come to you in sorrow for our own wrongdoings,  
And with sadness for the pain in our world.

We ask your forgiveness for our failure to protect those who  
depend on us

and for not listening to those who need us

Lord in your mercy

**All: Forgive us**

May the God of love and power

Forgive us and free us from all we have done wrong;

heal and strengthen us by his Spirit

and raise us to new life in Christ

Amen

Lord Jesus

You taught us to welcome children and to learn from them,

Help us in our families to embrace children with love,

And in our communities to surround children with care.

May every touch be a touch of grace

and every gesture a sign of respect

so all children might flourish and grow

day by day into fullness of life

In Jesus name

Amen

Lord God

Give wisdom and strength to all who work as advocates for  
children

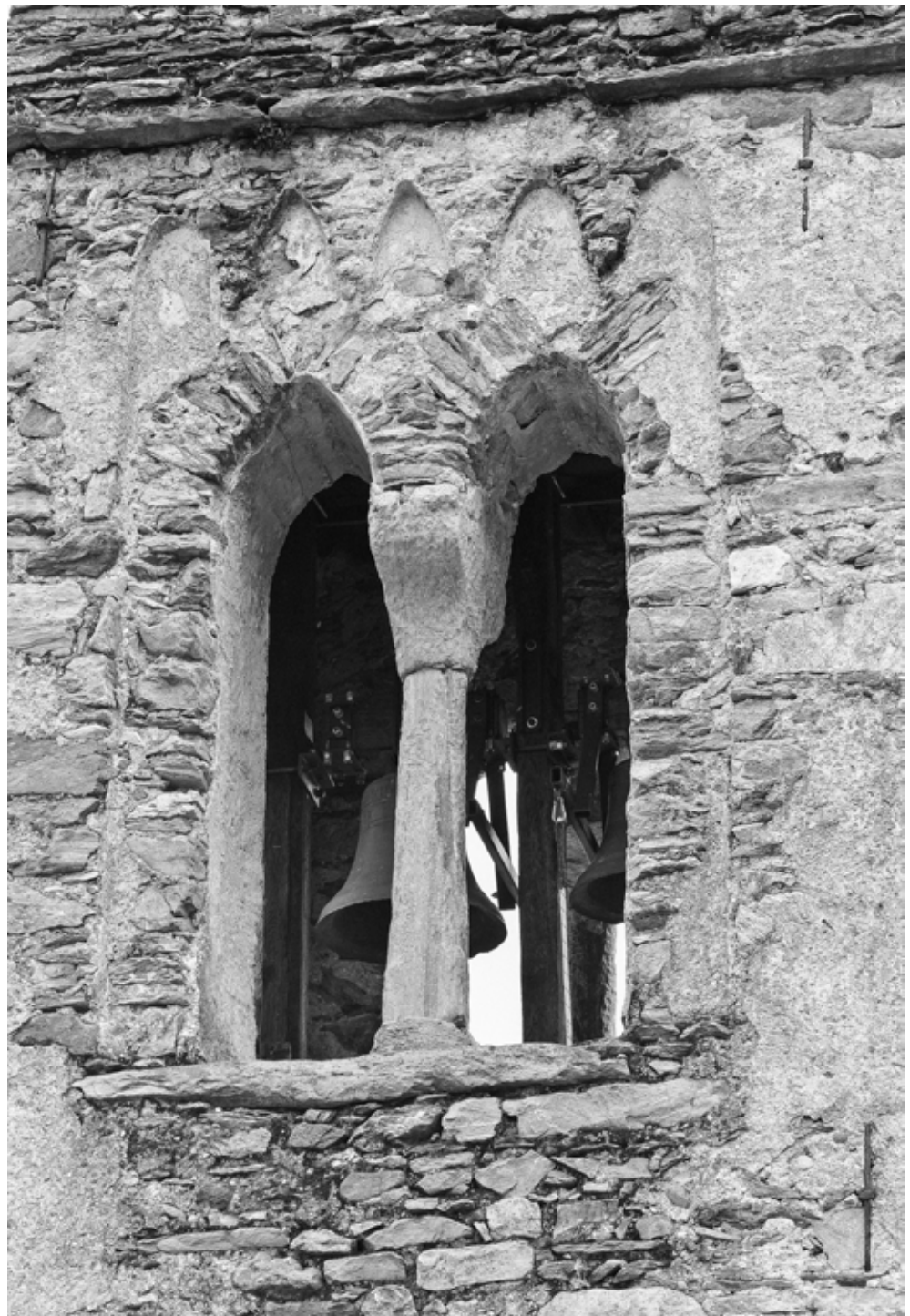
Inspire their words and direct their actions  
so that they might bring an end to all that is wrong  
in the treatment of children.

And may all children enjoy love, care and protection

In Jesus name

Amen

*Aiden Platten and colleagues*



# 8 Opportunities to promote prohibition and elimination of corporal punishment of children



## Universal Children's Day / World Day of Prayer and Action for Children

Universal Children's Day is observed on November 20th each year as a day of activity devoted to promoting the welfare of the children of the world. The date marks the day on which the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1959 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989.

The World Day of Prayer and Action for children is also observed each year on Universal Children's Day. It brings together secular and faith-based organisations in a call to work together and take action for the well-being of children around the world.

Although activities are highlighted in November, the World Day has grown into a movement that has influence throughout the year. It brings together the initiatives of faith-based and non-governmental organisations with those of state governments.

Examples of action from the many countries which have taken part in the World Day of Prayer and Action for Children can be found at <https://prayerandactionforchildren.org>.

*"Smacking children demeans and devalues children. They deserve as much respect and care as adults and physical punishment of them should be ruled out. Jesus believed that children were not just an asset for the future or a commitment to be undertaken for the sake of society. They were of infinite value as children. They deserved as much respect and care as any other human being."*

(The Most Rev Dr Barry Morgan, Archbishop of Wales – a message for Universal Children's Day 2013)



Use other events such as mother's day, father's day, and festivals during the church year to raise the status of children and promote respect for children.



## **A prayer for Universal Children's Day**

Loving God, you have called us to work for true justice in our communities  
and to be messengers of freedom for all who are not treated as your children.

Give us grace to put our faith into action  
to end the violence and cruelty  
that overshadows many children's lives.

Jesus taught us to welcome children and learn from them.  
May we use our imagination to put ourselves in our children's shoes

so that we learn to guide them with wisdom, gentleness and understanding.

And let us treat each child as we would treat the Christ child.  
Amen

## **The birth of a baby**

These prayers can be provided as hand-outs for parents at naming ceremonies and infant baptism.

### **Respecting children**

God of life, you are ever present in creation.

In the beauty of our beloved child

we see your glorious image

and in that wonder we find your divine spark.

May we respect and honour all children

and recognise the light of Christ in every child

For the love of this world

Amen

### **The challenge of parenting**

God our Creator

As Mary nurtured her son Jesus at each new stage of life with wisdom and grace,

may we too meet each new challenge of parenting with full humanity

and respond to each child with kindness, fairness and understanding.

Let us promote discipline as discipleship, teaching and guidance; not as smacking, punishment and humiliation.

Help us to speak out boldly and challenge all those

who use their faith to justify the painful punishment of children.



Create in us a sense of universal responsibility towards all children so that in our work and daily life we may follow the example of Jesus who listened to children and gave them status and respect. And may we recognise your likeness and image in every child. Amen

## Campaigns and other actions aimed at ending domestic violence

Religious communities have become increasingly outspoken about domestic violence but rarely make the connection between physical punishment of children, the most common form of violence in the family, and domestic violence against adults. A 2014 study which used UNICEF data from 25 countries found that women who believed that husbands were justified in hitting their wives were more likely to believe that corporal punishment is necessary to rear children and more likely to report that their child had experienced violent punishment in the home in the month prior to the survey than women who did not believe that husbands were justified in hitting their wives.<sup>2</sup>

## 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence

There are opportunities to build on the involvement of religious communities in the international campaign “16 days of Activism Against Gender Violence” ([www.immigrantwomenshealth.org.au/activism.htm](http://www.immigrantwomenshealth.org.au/activism.htm)), during which secular and faith-based communities come together, speak out and take action. Global activism takes place each year from November 25th (International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women) to December 10th (Human Rights Day).

During 2013 followers of Islam and Christianity in Zambia campaigned together under the slogan, “How are you living your faith? Every religion calls for non-violent relationships.” Scriptural quotes from the Qur’an and the Bible were used to promote discussion about non-violent relationships, and prayers and sermon notes on the theme were provided for worship.

Speaking during the campaign, the Rt Rev William Mchombo, Bishop of Eastern Zambia, stated: “There should be a recommendation that any violence against either male or female, be it adults or children, is morally unjust. All are human beings created in the image of God and as such, none is inferior to the other.”

*“... the Study on Violence against Children recognises that virtually all forms of violence are linked to entrenched gender roles and inequalities, and that the violation of the rights of children is closely linked to the status of women.”*

(Paulo Sérgio Pinheiro, The Independent Expert who led the UN Study on Violence against Children)



<sup>2</sup> Lansford, J. E. et al (2014), “Attitudes Justifying Domestic Violence Predict Endorsement of Corporal Punishment and Physical and Psychological Aggression towards Children: A Study in 25 Low- and Middle-Income Countries”, *The Journal of Pediatrics*, published online 9 January 2014

## What religious communities can do

- Faith-based communities can use the opportunity afforded through campaigns and actions to eliminate domestic violence and violence against women and girls such as 16 Days of Activism to create awareness of the harmful effects of corporal punishment of children.
- Emphasise that prohibition of corporal punishment and other degrading forms of punishment is a vital step in preventing violence against women and as part of a broader strategy for eliminating other forms of violence.
- Develop resources and multi-religious material which includes scriptural references and resources for worship; ensure that the scriptures are used to promote respect for children, equality and non-violence.

### A prayer for equality

Transcendent God, you are beyond gender.  
You have made us all in your likeness and image;  
women and men; boys and girls – all are equal in your sight.  
Shed your light into the dark places of misogyny and prejudice  
and end the daily discrimination and violence  
which blights the lives of women and girls  
and distorts relationships for men and boys.  
Grant us grace to treat all people with respect  
and to reflect your gentleness and goodness  
in all we do and say.  
Amen

Use opportunities for promoting prohibition of corporal punishment of children in the context of addressing domestic violence, including in marriage preparation, parenting groups, youth groups, hospital chaplaincy work, prison chaplaincy and visiting, women's refuges, women's organisations, youth groups, men's groups, etc.



# 9 The Golden Rule – a key concept for teaching interpersonal respect

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One of the most universally accepted values shared by religious communities, humanists, indigenous communities and secular traditions is the ethic of reciprocity known as the Golden Rule. The Golden Rule is best interpreted as: "Treat others as you would like to be treated in the same situation." To apply it we are required to imagine ourselves in the place of the person on the receiving end of our actions and to understand the effect of our actions on others. The Golden Rule can provide a pathway for treating others well but to apply it we require imagination and compassion.

At the heart of the Golden Rule is the concept that every person shares inherent human rights simply because they are human beings, and all human beings are equally important. The Golden Rule transcends theological and doctrinal differences and can be a starting point in engaging with and learning from people of diverse beliefs and traditions.

The Golden Rule can set a common standard for the values of fairness, justice, equality, compassion and non-violence that lie at the heart of morality. It provides a unifying basis for working in solidarity with faith-based and secular communities towards the elimination of corporal punishment of children.

## Prayer

### Living the Golden Rule

Divine Being,

We are called to view life from the perspective of others and to honour all people.

May we grow in kindness, compassion and respect for others as we each follow the teachings of the founder of our faith.

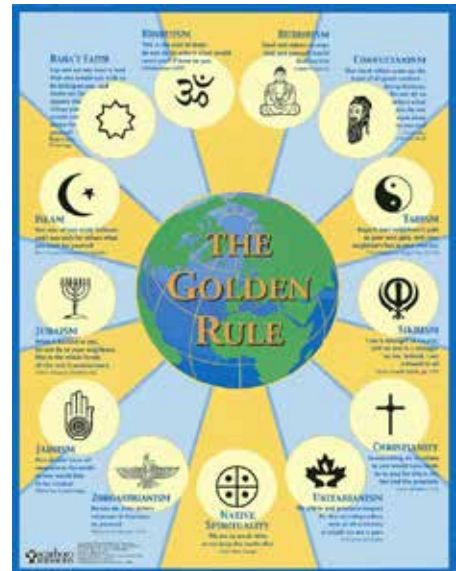
May we apply the Golden Rule to our daily lives and treat others as we would have them treat us.



## Peace and harmony

May there be peace on earth  
May the waters flow peacefully  
May the plants and creatures  
of the earth flourish.  
As the children of the world  
cry out to us  
to end violence and mistreatment  
let us work in harmony.  
Common be our resolution  
Non-violent our intention  
Unified in peace and compassion.

*Katy Lloyd*



## The Golden Rule for young people: ideas for children's assemblies and gatherings

*Leader:* All religions and traditions have a version of the Golden Rule – or in other words a guide to how we should treat other people. The Golden Rule tells us what different religions and traditions say about how we should relate to other people. It shows that although we all have very different ways of practising our religion and beliefs, we all have some things in common. This provides a starting point for working together in solidarity to end legalised violence against children.

### A dialogue

A short address about the Golden Rule can be given or the following dialogue for voices can be used.

*Voice 1:* At the heart of the Golden Rule are the values of compassion, kindness, justice, equality and non-violence, which we all share. The Golden Rule is for everyone!

*Voice 2:* So following the Golden Rule is about being aware of different cultures and traditions – and treating others in the way you would like to be treated in the same situation.

*Voice 3:* But that's a problem because we are all different and what one person likes another person may object to or find offensive.

*Voice 1:* I think it's about more than just treating others as you would like to be treated. It's about being sensitive and imaginative too. It's about imagining what it's really like to be that person and understanding why they behave as they do.

*Voice 2:* Like imagining walking in another person's shoes?



*Voice 3:* I can see how telling lies or stealing from someone is against the Golden Rule. No one wants to be lied to or have their belongings stolen. But what about the everyday things that happen to children at home and at school? Shouldn't we be thinking about how our words and actions affect our family and friends?

*Voice 1:* Yes I agree. If only adults who treat children badly thought more about how their power and authority affects children.

*Voice 2:* If they were able to put themselves in the shoes of a child and remember what it was like to be a child and how it felt to be criticised or smacked, they would probably remember how painful it was and how miserable and despondent they felt.

*Voice 3:* So how would you encourage parents who smack their children to follow the Golden Rule?

*Voice 1:* I would ask them to imagine themselves in their child's shoes. How would they feel being hit by the person they love – the person who is entrusted with their care and protection? If a big person hits a small person we call it bullying so how would they feel as a small child being hit by someone very much bigger? What would their reaction be? How would they feel towards the person who had hit them? How would they feel if the child hit them back?

*Voice 2:* Many adults make light of being smacked and say smacking didn't do them any harm. They say children should be treated differently. But there is nothing in the Golden Rule that says it only applies to adults.

## **Activity**

A box of shoes is brought to the front. The shoes (these could be real shoes or cardboard footprints) are all labelled with the names of people (label appropriately for the group – you could include people in the news or those encountered in everyday life). In a moment of silence all children are invited to try on the shoes and imagine what it would be like to be the person on the label.

## **Questions to ask about walking in someone else's shoes**

- What questions does this raise?
- Have I gained new ideas and insights?
- What did I learn about myself?
- What might I change?

## **Share your ideas and insights**

Make a group collage or banner with your version of the Golden Rule

## Assembly or gathering for children

Gold often symbolises what is good and enduring. There are sayings which include “gold” such as “She has a heart of gold” and “They were as good as gold”. Things that are considered important and valuable are often made of gold such as a gold cup, gold medal etc.

The Golden Rule is often used to help people imagine what it is like to walk in someone else’s shoes and what it would be like to be in the place of another person. It is an important way of thinking about how the things we do and say make other people feel.

### Activity 1: Living the Golden Rule

- Discuss what it would be like if everyone lived the Golden Rule – at home, at school and in the community.
- Gentleness, kindness and compassion are qualities of people who try to live the Golden Rule. Can you think of other words?
- Make a poster or banner illustrating the Golden Rule. Use your own words to describe the Golden Rule.

### Activity 2: Footprints

#### Preparation

Prepare versions of the Golden Rule from the major world religions. Cut out footprints, and number them.

Number cards and add captions, for example (1) is crying because someone has hit her; (2) has just moved house and left his friends behind; (3) is celebrating her birthday; (4) has made a mistake; (5) has a new dog ; (6) has had a fall etc.

#### Introduction

Explain the Golden Rule: “We should treat others as we want to be treated in the same situation”.

Illustrate how different religious groups and non-religious traditions all have similar versions of the Golden Rule.

Talk about what it means to treat others as you would like to be treated. Explain that to treat other people as we would like to be treated involves trying to imagine what it is like to be them. How does it feel? It is rather like walking in someone else’s shoes.

#### Game

Invite children to play a game to practice how to treat other people. Place the prepared cards face down and invite each child in turn to pick up a card.

Explain “Your footprint is number one.” The child stands on the footprint. The card says “Your friend is crying because someone has hit her.....”



## Questions

- Have you ever been hurt?
- How does it feel?
- How would you like to be treated?
- How can you help?

Children can choose to think about the answers and keep their thoughts to themselves or they may choose to tell everyone what they would do.

When the game is complete, invite children to notice other children's needs and offer help when they have an opportunity to do so. Hand each child a gold card depicting the Golden Rule.

### **The Golden Rule for young children – “Meet the Blobs”**

“Meet the Blobs” is an activity book for young children based on the Golden Rule and children's rights. Young children helped develop the activities in this publication, which contains a board game. Download a copy from: <http://churchesfornon-violence.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Meet-the-Blobs.pdf>

Develop the Blobs activity on page 2. Invite children to model or draw a pair of extra special kindness shoes from craft materials. Encourage the children to imagine the shoes being worn by someone they know and to think about the person's feelings and ways of being kind to them.

## The Golden Rule in world religions and traditions

Christianity	All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you do ye so to them; for this is the law and the prophets. Matthew 7:1
Confucianism	Do not do to others what you would not like yourself. Then there will be no resentment against you, either in the family or in the state. Analects 12:2
Buddhism	Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful. Udana-Varga 5,1
Hinduism	This is the sum of duty; do naught onto others what you would not have them do unto you. Mahabharata 5,1517
Islam	No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself. Sunnah
Judaism	What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellowman. This is the entire Law; all the rest is commentary. Talmud, Shabbat 3i
Sikhism	Don't create enmity with anyone as God is within everyone. Guru Arjan Devji 259
Taoism	Regard your neighbor's gain as your gain, and your neighbor's loss as your own loss. Tai Shang Kan Yin P'ien
Zoroastrianism	That nature is good which refrains from doing to another whatsoever is not good for itself. Dadisten-I-dinik, 94,5



# Resources

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## The Kyoto Declaration



### **A Multi-Religious Commitment to Confront Violence against Children**

**August 2006**

As representatives of various religious communities gathered at the *Religions for Peace VIII* World Assembly in Kyoto, Japan, we are committed to confront the reality of violence that affects children in our societies. We offer our support to mobilizing the international community through the United Nations Study on Violence against Children to address these critical issues, and we are ready to work in partnership with governments, UN agencies, and other civil society actors to implement the recommendations of this study.

We find strong consensus across our religious traditions about the inherent dignity of every person, including children. This requires that we reject all forms of violence against children and protect and promote the sanctity of life in every stage of a child's development. Our religions share principles of compassion, justice, love and solidarity that are great strengths in dealing with the difficult presence of violence in human society.

Our faith traditions take a holistic view of a child's life, and thus seek to uphold all the rights of the child in the context of its family, community and the broader social, economic and political environment. All children hold these rights equally and we must ensure that boys and girls have equal opportunities to enjoy these rights, particularly education, protection, health, social development and participation. Our religious communities are blessed to be multi-generational, and we must use this to support the active participation of children in their own development and to address issues of violence.

We must acknowledge that our religious communities have not fully upheld their obligations to protect our children from violence. Through omission, denial and silence, we have at times tolerated, perpetuated and ignored the reality of violence against children in homes, families, institutions and communities, and not actively confronted the suffering that this violence causes. Even as we have not fully lived up to our responsibilities in this regard, we believe that religious communities must be part of the solution to eradicating violence against children, and we commit ourselves to take leadership in our religious communities and the broader society.

None of us can address this problem alone. It requires partnerships, solidarity, and building alliances. Even as our religions have much to offer, we also are open to learning more about the development and well being of children from other sectors, so that we can each maximize our strengths. We are strongly committed to fostering effective mechanisms for inter-religious cooperation to more effectively combat violence against children.

Based on these principles and guided by the power of the Divine as it is understood in each of our traditions, we make the following recommendations and commitments, speaking to our religious communities, governments, the United Nations, civil society and to all throughout the world who have held a child in love – with tears for its pain, with joy for its life:

1. We will create greater awareness in our communities about the impact of all forms of violence against children, and work actively to change attitudes and practices that perpetuate violence in homes, families, institutions and communities, including corporal punishment, emotional and sexual violence.
2. We will promote the child as a person with rights and dignity, using our religious texts to provide good examples that can help adults to stop using violence in dealing with children.
3. We have an important obligation to teach and train our children, which involves discipline and helping children understand their responsibilities. We will educate and train parents, teachers, religious leaders and others who work with children to find non-violent forms of discipline and education that will ensure their proper upbringing and protect them from violent actions.
4. We will develop curriculum to use in theological training and in parental education to raise awareness about child rights and ways to eliminate the use of violence.
5. We are committed to inter-religious cooperation to address violence and will make use of the synergies among our religious communities to promote methodologies, experiences and practices in preventing violence against children.
6. We call upon our governments to adopt legislation to prohibit all forms of violence against children, including corporal punishment, and to ensure the full rights of children, consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international and regional agreements. We urge them to establish appropriate mechanisms to ensure the effective implementation of these laws and to ensure that religious communities participate formally in these mechanisms. Our religious communities are ready to serve as monitors of implementation, making use of national and international bodies to maintain accountability.
7. We encourage religious communities and other public actors to use special days, such as the International Day of the Child, to bring public and media attention to child rights issues, particularly violence against children.
8. We call on UNICEF and the World Conference of Religions for Peace to facilitate the sharing of information and developing of resources to assist our communities to more effectively address violence against children.

Kyoto, Japan  
28 August 2006

## Putting children at the centre

*(Matthew 18: 1-5)*

- ◆ How does the church demonstrate respect for children as people in their own right?
- ◆ How does the church put children at the centre?
- ◆ How does the church uphold children's human rights?
- ◆ How does the church involve children in the life of the church?
- ◆ What preventative measures are in place to protect children from harm and to ensure their physical, emotional and spiritual integrity is respected?
- ◆ Is prohibition of corporal punishment of children explicit in the child protection policy?
- ◆ Does the church make parents aware of the harmful effects of violent punishment of children?
- ◆ How does the church listen to children and enable children's voices to be heard?
- ◆ How does the church promote education for non-violent relationships and peace-making and how does it involve children in the process?
- ◆ How does the church encourage and support its members to use positive non-violent discipline?
- ◆ How does the church evaluate its work with children?

## Are children respected in the life and worship of the church?

Children are treated as marginal, neglected, ignored, excluded, emotionally abused or demeaned in church when:

- they are 'picked on' to answer a question
- they are made to feel foolish through lack of knowledge
- they are used as token participants: 'hold this', 'be the butt of a joke', 'accessorise me'
- they are 'used' to read something someone else has either written or decided is suitable
- they are only invited to respond to closed questions with 'right' answers
- their opinions and ideas are not sought
- they are allocated sound effect noises and gimmick involvement
- they are patronised
- their trust is manipulated for the entertainment of others
- they are clapped after a contribution but no-one else is applauded
- they are instructed in performing an item without consultation or explanation
- they are viewed as recipients of entertainment designed to keep them 'being good' and 'sitting still'
- they are told the 'right' interpretation of scripture as perceived by the adults
- their vulnerability is exploited for the benefit of adults

## Ideas for ensuring that children are respected and included in the church

- Create a comfortable designated space in the church for children. Involve children in the process and discuss with them what is needed.
- Ask children how they would like to participate in planning church activities, and ensure they can do so.
- Create an environment where children's views are valued. Plan activities with children so that children have a voice about the things that concern them. Discuss with children what else can be done to listen to children and include their views. Encourage children to solve conflict creatively.
- Ensure that all those in the church into whose care children are entrusted, are properly qualified for the work and respect children as individuals. Discuss what should be included in job descriptions to ensure that children's rights are promoted and respected.
- Ensure that all those who work with children are given training in positive non-violent approaches to care and discipline. Discuss how the church should support those who work with children. Be clear about lines of accountability.
- Monitor the curriculum to ensure that non-violence and equality are an integral part of teaching.
- Ensure that the right of the child to freedom of religion or belief is respected. Create an environment where children are free to question and explore religion and belief so that they can make informed decisions about matters of faith.
- Ensure that gender equality is discussed and taught by example so that boys and girls have equal opportunities and respect each other.

## A Charter for religious communities

We commit ourselves to addressing violence against children in all its forms and we resolve to work with others towards eliminating violence against children.

### **1. All children are entitled to equal respect for their inherent human dignity**

Working actively towards a culture of respect for all children is a key towards ending violence against children. We will, in cooperation with others, foster respect for all children.

### **2. All children are entitled to grow up in family and all other settings free from corporal punishment and all other forms of violence and humiliating treatment**

Children are entitled to more not less protection from violence than adults, including protection from physical, spiritual, emotional, verbal, sexual, psychological and gender-based violence. We will use every opportunity to work with others to create awareness about the negative effects of violence against children. Preventing violence against children and urging governments to pass legislation to end legalised violence against children, including corporal punishment, will be a priority.

### **3. All children have the right to speak out and be listened to**

The knowledge, ideas, gifts, competence, life experiences and perspectives of children should be respected, encouraged and listened to in both family and community life. We will demonstrate full respect and regard for the dignity of children by facilitating children's participation and involvement in issues of concern to them.

### **4. All adults have the responsibility to enable children to feel safe enough to speak out when they feel hurt or threatened**

All adults who are in contact with children should have an understanding of the needs of children and of different stages of child development. Adults should be aware of the best ways of creating an environment where children feel safe to express themselves. Adults should also develop skills for communicating with children at different life stages. We will facilitate training to promote these actions.

### **5. All children are entitled to positive, non-violent relationships with the adults who care for them**

In our work and contact with children we will strive to build relationships between adults and children which are positive and life-enhancing. Adults can teach children by their own example and demonstrate ways of resolving conflict without the use of hitting or any other form of violence, however supposedly "reasonable". Adults are the protectors, guides and supporters of children and as such responsible for their quality of life.

**6. The protection of children from violence is the responsibility of the whole community**

Children should be active equal participants with adults in solving problems of violence in community whether it is adult to child, child to child or adult to adult violence. We will encourage children to use their capacity to make a positive contribution in keeping with their age and development.

**7. All children are entitled to learn about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in a way that is appropriate to their age and development**

We will use every opportunity to support initiatives to enable children to become fully conversant with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and to raise adults' awareness and understanding of the Convention.

**8. All children are entitled to the highest standard of care and protection from those who work with them**

All adults working with children in our religious communities will receive high standards of training, support, resources and clear lines of accountability for working with children. Adults are responsible for creating networks for the prevention of violence against children.

**9. Children who have endured any form of violence are entitled to emotional, physical, spiritual and psychological support from people qualified to help them**

Our religious communities will, whenever possible, work with qualified people to bring support, compassion, spiritual help and healing to children who have endured forms of violence.

**10. All children are entitled to learn non-violent ways to resolve conflict**

We commit ourselves to providing positive guidance in resolving conflict that leads to compassion, justice and fairness and respect for the human rights of others.

## Ending corporal punishment of children – a model statement

*The following model statement can be adapted by local inter-faith partnerships as a statement of solidarity on the issue, to use as an expression of support for NGO campaigns, or as a letter from local religious groups and individuals to lobby members of parliament or to gain broader support and forge new partnerships.*

“We affirm that our different religions respect the human dignity of every child. This calls us to work together to confront the pain and humiliation inflicted against children through the practice of corporal punishment in homes and families, schools, religious institutions and other community settings. We are available to put our faith into action and to speak out on behalf of all children who endure corporal punishment. There are no circumstances under which this harmful, humiliating practice can be justified either in the name of religion, in the guise of discipline or through the sacred scriptures and the tenets of our different faiths.

We are committed to taking leadership and working in solidarity with people from other sectors, communities, religious networks, NGOs and governments towards ending all corporal punishment of children.

Giving children equal protection from assault is crucial because it says so much about the sort of society we want for all children. Ending the legality and commonplace practice of corporal punishment will reflect the seriousness with which we regard the human rights of every child to grow up free from the fear of being hit and humiliated by those whose duty it is to protect children from harm.

This is not only a moral imperative, it is about giving children the respect to which they are entitled.

Discipline is about teaching and guiding children by adult example – not through hitting children and causing pain. It is important that law reform is accompanied by extensive public education promoting positive, non-violent discipline and access to resources and support for parents. This is an opportunity for our values and hopes for our children and families to shape our laws and to make a positive difference.

If we really want a less violent society and peace in our world we must end the legality of corporal punishment, promote non-violent relationships between adults and children so that they are treated with gentleness, love, compassion and respect.”

For further examples of statements of religious support see [http://churchesfornon-violence.org/wp/?page\\_id=81](http://churchesfornon-violence.org/wp/?page_id=81)

## Online resources

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

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

This 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 *Youth against violence* can be downloaded at [www.unicef.org/violencestudy/responding.html](http://www.unicef.org/violencestudy/responding.html)

### **Understanding the Convention on the Rights of the Child**

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

The site includes the videos *Teaching the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)* and *Speak for yourself! Children, the UN and the CRC*

Child friendly publications and Children's Declarations can be found on the website of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence against Children, Children's Corner, <http://srsg.violenceagainstchildren.org/children-corner>

### ***Never Violence – Thirty Five Years on from Sweden's Abolition of Corporal Punishment***

This summary of research into the impact of Sweden's ban on corporal punishment can be found at <http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se>

### ***Positive Discipline in Everyday Parenting***

Written by Joan Durrant, published by Save the Children, third edition 2013, this manual and associated materials is available at [www.positivedisciplineeveryday.com](http://www.positivedisciplineeveryday.com)

### ***Parenting for a Peaceful World***

This is the title of a book by Robin Grille. An associated video, narrated by Ajas Swafford aged 10, traces the history of violent treatment of children from early times and discusses the negative effects of violence on generations of children. It can be viewed at [www.naturalchild.org/videos/parenting\\_peaceful\\_world.html](http://www.naturalchild.org/videos/parenting_peaceful_world.html)



## **Churches' Network for Non-violence**

<http://churchesfornon-violence.org>

The Churches' Network for Non-violence (CNNV) 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.

## **Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children**

[www.endcorporalpunishment.org](http://www.endcorporalpunishment.org)

The Global Initiative aims to speed the end of corporal punishment of children across the world. The website contains information on all aspects of prohibiting corporal punishment of children including an up-to-date account of global progress; regional and national reports on the legality of corporal punishment in the home, alternative care settings, day care, schools and penal systems; research, and resources, including on positive discipline. A regular newsletter reports on progress towards prohibition worldwide, including information on latest developments, new resources and research, and the work of human rights treaty bodies in relation to corporal punishment – to subscribe email [info@endcorporalpunishment.org](mailto:info@endcorporalpunishment.org)

## **Child Rights International Network (CRIN)**

[www.crin.org](http://www.crin.org)

CRIN is a network of child rights organisations working to improve the lives of children.

## **Save the Children**

<http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/terms/corporal-punishment>

Save the Children contributed to Sweden becoming the first country to explicitly ban all corporal punishment, including in the home. It is working to highlight the issue in many other countries and collaborating with organisations to put corporal punishment on the political agenda across the world. There are many resources available to download at the resource centre.

# Notes

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