

Prayers for Foster Care Fortnight - May 2020

Foster Care fortnight runs from 11 May to 24 May this year and is an opportunity to share in prayer for all those involved in the foster care system in any way. During the COVID-19 crisis, families come under increasing stress and the support of social services and the call for foster carers is greatly needed. This is a short online prayer for use alone or with others.

Lord we gather together, segregated in body but one in spirit,

Distanced and yet united in your love,

Set apart to work but drawn together to praise your holy name.

We thank you for the advances in technology that enable us to meet and share together;

Sharing in companionship,

Sharing in grace,

Sharing in prayer and worship as one family.

Bless us now, we pray, and centre our minds and souls on this special time with you.

AMEN

Psalm 68 – selected verses (NIV)

Sing to God, sing in praise of his name,
extol him who rides on the clouds^[a];
rejoice before him—his name is the LORD.

⁵ A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows,
is God in his holy dwelling.

⁶ God sets the lonely in families,^[a]
he leads out the prisoners with singing;
but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land.

³² Sing to God, you kingdoms of the earth,
sing praise to the Lord,

³³ to him who rides across the highest heavens, the ancient heavens,
who thunders with mighty voice.

³⁴ Proclaim the power of God,
whose majesty is over Israel,
whose power is in the heavens.

³⁵ You, God, are awesome in your sanctuary;
the God of Israel gives power and strength to his people.

Praise be to God!

Every day more than 50 children are taken into care in the UK

They are removed from chaotic, traumatic, abusive, neglectful or desperate situations. Some will need a home for a few nights, some for a few months or years, while others will not be able to return to their birth families and will become one of the 4,000 children who are currently waiting for a permanent home with a new forever family.

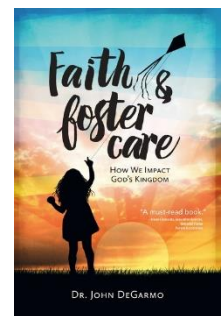
9,000 young people leave care every year – what happens to them? 22% of female care leavers become teenage parents 24% of the adult prison population are care leavers A third of homeless people have been in care At least a third of sex workers, and potentially as many as 70%, have been in care 38% of care leavers are not in education, training or employment (NEET)

(From <https://www.homeforgood.org.uk/>)

You will need a pencil/crayon/pen and paper for use during this prayer. As each part of the prayer is read, you are invited to add to your drawing. Drawing instructions will be given in green.

Our prayers are based on the writing of [Dr. John DeGarmo](#)-
Leading Expert in Parenting and Foster Care

Father to the fatherless, mother to the motherless,
God who sets the lonely in families and cares for all,
Our prayers this morning lift up before you all those in the foster care system
Children, young people, care leavers, families and all who strive to support them.



We know that the statistics show that every day more than fifty children and young people are taken into care. In the centre of your paper draw a child.

This day, this hour, this moment there will be so many children and young people coming into foster care. We pray for those are coming into foster care right at this very moment and for all families where intervention is needed.

Children are often moved from home to home, each with a different style of parenting, each moving bringing new adjustments and broken relationships. By your child, draw a house, preferably with an open door to welcome the child in.

We pray that children and young people in foster care do not experience multiple disruptions, or move from foster home to foster home to foster home. Lord, give strength, patience and perseverance to those who open their homes to children despite the challenges.

Children and young people thrive best in their own homes and families, where those families are equipped to keep them safe and nurture them. Many foster children move with their few belongings in carrier bags or a bin bag. Let's draw a suitcase for our child's belongings.

We pray that children and young people are able to remain in foster care for as short a time as it is safely possible and may be successfully reunited with family with ongoing support where needed.

With rapid turnover in the system, a child or young person may have a number of different case workers, each of whom will doubtless have a massive workload. Some are better than others. Near your child, draw a social worker, maybe with a briefcase in hand.

We pray that children and young people are able to form healthy relationships with their case workers. Grant case workers the skills to be wise, loving, kind, compassionate, and understanding of each one's particular and individual needs.

It is unusual for children in care to be an only child and many come from families with many children. Often these children will be separated into different foster placements, sometimes because it is in the interest of the child for some reason, but more often because this is the only option available. Draw a sibling some distance from your child on the paper, reaching out towards them.

We pray for those who are separated from their siblings in other foster homes, that where possible they are all able to stay in contact with each other and, if right, they are able to remain in a foster home together.

IN the research into Adverse Childhood Experiences we learn of the lifelong impact of traumatic experiences and toxic stress, affecting physical health and wellbeing as well as mental health. Draw a first aid kit.

Lord, heal the trauma, pain, and profound damage that these children and young people have been exposed to and we pray that you will help them to heal from these experiences and enjoy life in all its fullness.

Children and young people in care get used to their fate being in the hands of others who make decisions about what should happen to them and their families. Draw a law book at the foot of your child.

We pray that the judges, case workers, and those who decide the child's or young person's fate receive the wisdom they need in order to make the best decision that that child or young person's best interest. We pray too that the children and young people will feel they have a voice and are heard in that process. We pray too that the lawmakers will make

decisions that are best for the children and young people and for the foster families.

As we heard, the prospects for care leavers are not promising and many find themselves adrift. In your picture, draw a signpost.

We pray for those young adults who are leaving the foster care system, often with little ongoing support and minimal prospects.

There is always demand for more people to become foster parents. It takes particular gifts and talents and is not an easy thing to do but can make a real difference to a child or young person's life. Now is the time to draw a foster parent or foster parents in your picture, someone welcoming that child or young person as if they were their own.

We pray that more people would choose to follow the path of becoming foster parents so that no child or young person is left waiting. And we pray for the biological children of our foster parents, that their hearts may be open to their fellow foster sibling. May they too feel cherished, valued and heard.

Often overlooked is the birth family. It is a rare case indeed for there to be no love at all between parent and child, and parents can experience guilt, bereavement, anger, confusion, indignation and all manner of emotion. Let's mark this loss by drawing some tears on the edge of our picture.

We pray for the birth parents and biological family members who also experience trauma and may lack the skills, finances or mental health to keep their children safe. Comfort them in their loss and strengthen them and inspire them to do what is needed to create a safe and nurturing home. May they feel helped and supported in their struggles.

Those whose job is to support children and young people in need of fostering often come in for criticism and may feel overwhelmed by the flood of need that they can have little influence over. They may feel a lack of resources to draw on. At the foot of the social worker, draw a small sack of money.

We pray for the social workers, engaged in a thankless, tiring and often soul-destroying task. May they see their hard work bear fruit in safe and secure lives. We pray that they will receive the funding and resources they need.

We too have our part to play. We too are called. There are many times in the Bible where it is made clear to us that God wants us to reach out to those in need with prayer but also with action. You may want to draw a church round the outside of your picture, or a cross, or a heart, or hands – something to symbolise the love of God and of God's people.

Lord, you have no body on earth but ours. May our hands and feet, our eyes and ears, our hearts, our words and our actions support all foster parents and those they care for.

We pray that our churches hear the call to help and support all those involved in the foster care system and that they answer this call from God with grace and mercy. Lord, touch our hearts to examine how you call us to be part of this help and support, this foster care fortnight and always.

Father to the fatherless, mother to the motherless,
God who sets the lonely in families and cares for all,
Hear our prayer

“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress.” *James 1:27*

Lord, hear our prayer

Let us join in The Grace together



Illustration from lambsongs.co.nz



With thanks to David Salsbury and Roo Stewart for permission to share their drawings

See <https://www.homeforgood.org.uk/resource/home-for-good-church> for ideas on becoming a Home for Good church.