



**The
Children's
Society**

**No child
should feel
alone**

Celebrate with The Children's Society this Mothering Sunday

Strengthening the safety
net for families in crisis

**Strengthening
the Safety Net**



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Foreword by the Rt Revd Libby Lane

**I am delighted to introduce and commend
The Children's Society's Mothering Sunday
resource for 2019.**



Mothering Sunday is a day to not only give thanks for mothers and all who care for us, but to also think of the church as 'mother' in our communities, reflecting the God who is Mother and Father to us all. How can churches reach out, in the service of God, to those around them who need their love and care?

This year, the resource links to our Strengthening the Safety Net campaign.

When families experience a financial crisis, they may seek urgent help from their council in the form of an emergency loan, furniture, equipment or food. In recent years, this essential safety net has been worn away as councils struggle to balance budgets.

It is often mothers and children who are most affected when such support is not available. Churches are often in the vanguard of helping out in these situations, for example by running food banks. Our campaign calls for the safety net for families in crisis to be strengthened, to ensure that no child is left cold or hungry.

Our resource this year includes all-age talks, a small group resource, prayers, hymns and activities for children and young people.

I join in the prayer that churches can offer the 'mother love' of God to every soul in their parish, especially struggling families, and that we all may play our part in strengthening the safety net for the vulnerable.

With every blessing,



The Rt Revd Libby Lane

Bishop Elect of Derby

Vice-chair of trustees, The Children's Society

Introduction

How to use this resource

The resources in this pack may be used as a complete package or as standalone elements. Please feel free to pick and choose what is useful in your context.

This year, we are linking with the theme of our Strengthening the Safety Net campaign, for families in crisis. You can read more about the campaign and why it is appropriate to feature it on Mothering Sunday on page 6.

As Mothering Sunday is often an all-age service, we have included talks and activities based on the lectionary readings that are suitable for all. There is also a separate small group resource that may be used in a café church-style setting or study group, and activities for children's and youth groups.

The resource has been written by the Revd Bryony Taylor, Rector of Barlborough and Clowne in the Diocese of Derby. Bryony is the author of *More TV Vicar?* and a study course on the TV series 'Broken'. She tweets @vahva.

We hope you enjoy using these materials. Please send us any feedback at church@childrenssociety.org.uk

What is Mothering Sunday?

Mothering Sunday is celebrated in churches on the fourth Sunday in Lent. Traditionally it is a day when we thank God for the love of our mothers, and we thank them in person for their care for us.

In the UK, the service dates back hundreds of years to the time when people were encouraged once a year, on Laetare Sunday, to return to their home or 'mother' church or cathedral. In Latin, the first words of the prayer for this Sunday were 'Laetare, O Jerusalem' ('Rejoice, O Jerusalem') taken from Isaiah 66.10, and the prayer spoke of the love for Jerusalem – the original 'mother church'.

This means that there is a small but distinct difference between Mothering Sunday and 'Mother's Day', the more commercial celebration. Mother's Day was instigated in 1914 in the USA as a holiday on the second Sunday in May, as a result of a campaign by Anna Jarvis to recognise the important role of mothers in society following the death of her own mother. Initially the wearing of a white carnation and a proclamation from the House of Representatives honoured mothers. The commercialisation of the day rapidly grew, though Anna Jarvis is known to have taken a stand against this.

Mothering Sunday as we know it today in the UK, and across the Anglican Communion, is an evolution of the traditional pre-reformation Laetare Sunday observance. It retains the post-reformation practice of returning home from domestic service to visit church and family – picking flowers on the way to give to mothers and decorate the church. Constance Smith, who was inspired by Anna Jarvis, campaigned for a revival of Mothering Sunday observance in Lent, writing a booklet 'The Revival of Mothering Sunday' in 1920. This was so influential and widely read that by 1938 it was said that every parish in the UK celebrated Mothering Sunday.

Today, many churches provide small posies of flowers for children in the church to give to their mothers and other carers to thank them. Increasingly, churches are also aware of those for whom Mothering Sunday is a painful time and are including prayers and affirmations of care for children in all its forms. These may address issues of infertility, baby loss, childlessness, child bereavement and parental bereavement, particularly of a mother.

In 2017/18 The Children's Society directly played a caring role in the lives of over 11,000 children and young people, and helped bring positive change to the lives of half a million more. Through partnership with the Church we believe that much can be done to bring

'life in all its fullness' to this country's children and young people, so that together we can strengthen the safety net and be embraced by the mother love of God.

The crisis support campaign – Strengthening the safety net for families in crisis

Donna is a single mum of three, and her youngest child has autism. The family had a house fire and had to move into temporary accommodation for six months.

Linda and Mike have six children. Linda is a full-time carer and Mike is currently not working. Their godchild temporarily moved into their house after she was made homeless, forcing Linda and Mike to visit a food bank for support.

Wayne is a single stay-at-home dad with two children, one of whom has a learning disability. Wayne's benefit payments don't cover the needs of his disabled child so he relies on support from local charities to buy the equipment he needs.¹

If you were experiencing a crisis where would you go for support?

People might be in crisis for all sorts of reasons. It could be a disaster – like a house fire – or illness, domestic violence, bereavement, or redundancy.

Often, the only safety net to break their fall and set them on the path to stability is emergency funding from councils, along with support from churches, charities and food banks.

Families and young people may seek urgent help from their council when they are in a financial crisis and need support such as an emergency loan, a grant, furniture, equipment or food.

But the safety net that helps these families is now at risk.

Council-run emergency funds are closing or at risk of closure, and increasing pressure is being put on local charities, faith, and community groups to plug the gaps. Across the country, families and vulnerable young people are struggling to access the help they desperately need.

This is why we are calling for change, to strengthen the system and ensure no child is left cold or hungry. Together we can strengthen the safety net.

Why on Mothering Sunday?

The destruction of the safety net is having a serious effect on mothers, children and teenagers in our communities.

For most of us Mothering Sunday tends to be a celebration of our own mothers and those who mother in our community. This year we are asking you to turn your gaze towards those who are finding motherhood a challenge, and to children and teenagers whose parents are finding it hard to support them.

Mothering Sunday was originally all about returning to our 'mother church'. Our prayer is that churches at the heart of their communities can be a great mother to every soul in their parish, especially the struggling families.

May the church begin to repair and strengthen the safety net with the help of the Holy Spirit.

¹ Case studies taken from Not Making Ends Meet, 2018.

All-age talk and activity ideas

An all age talk using Exodus 2.1-10

You may wish to tell this story dramatically by using either a dramatised bible or The Lion Storyteller Bible.² If you have an 'Open the Book' team at your church you could use those costumes and resources to tell the story, or use a Godly Play version.

Exodus 2:1-10 (NRSV)

¹Now a man from the house of Levi went and married a Levite woman. ²The woman conceived and bore a son; and when she saw that he was a fine baby, she hid him for three months.³ When she could hide him no longer she got a papyrus basket for him, and plastered it with bitumen and pitch; she put the child in it and placed it among the reeds on the bank of the river. ⁴His sister stood at a distance, to see what would happen to him.

⁵The daughter of Pharaoh came down to bathe at the river, while her attendants walked beside the river. She saw the basket among the reeds and sent her maid to bring it. ⁶When she opened it, she saw the child. He was crying, and she took pity on him. 'This must be one of the Hebrews' children,' she said. ⁷Then his sister said to Pharaoh's daughter, 'Shall I go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?' ⁸Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Yes.' So the girl went and called the child's mother. ⁹Pharaoh's daughter said to her, 'Take this child and nurse it for me, and I will give you your wages.' So the woman took the child and nursed it. ¹⁰When the child grew up, she brought him to Pharaoh's daughter, and she took him as her son. She named him Moses, 'because,' she said, 'I drew him out of the water.'

Ask the congregation:

Which person in this story do you most identify with?

The baby Moses? Moses is helpless, he can't help himself, he is a tiny baby and is reliant on others to care for him and keep him alive.

Moses' mother? Moses' mother has the idea to put Moses in a basket, she protects it from holes so that it won't sink and places him in the river, praying that he will be all right.

Moses' sister? Moses' sister, Miriam, doesn't have anything to give to Moses but she loves him and will do anything to protect him and waits for an opportunity where perhaps she can help?

Pharaoh's Daughter? The Princess is privileged, she has money and security, all the things she needs and more. What can she do with what she has?

Invite everyone to talk to the person next to them about the character with whom they most identify, and why they have chosen that character.

(Collect feedback from congregation)

Go on to say:

In our society, there are a lot of people in a very vulnerable position. Our Government used to give a lot of support to families in need – a bit like Moses' mother, strengthening the basket with tar so that it wouldn't sink. But now there is no more tar – what used to be a strong safety net now has big holes in it, and increasingly organisations such as The Children's Society and churches are trying to strengthen the safety net once again.

Today we are thinking about mothering in all its forms. The tradition of Mothering Sunday began when people were given the chance to go and visit their 'mother church' during Lent

² Bob Hartman, The Lion Storyteller Bible, Lion Children's Books, 2013

to see their families. Have you ever thought of the church as a mother to you? In this story we've heard today, the different characters behave like a mother to Moses and use what they have to help.

How can our church be like a mother to those in need in our community, especially children and young people?

Perhaps we can be like Moses' sister, Miriam, and go to someone with more resources than us to ask for help. For example, we could write to our MP about issues in our area and join The Children's Society's campaign.

Perhaps we can be like Moses' mother, and help patch up the broken safety net by volunteering our time or donating to a local foodbank or holiday club.

Perhaps we can be like Pharaoh's daughter and donate generously to a local charity or church project to support local families.

Let us give thanks for those who have helped us when we've been struggling, and ask God to show us how we can help those in need.

You may wish to do the **'fortune teller' activity** at this point in the service or give people the activity sheet to take home.

Activity – making a 'fortune teller'

This is a fortune teller with a difference – it contains parts of the Moses story and some of the things St Paul writes about in 2 Corinthians to help us think about how we can help strengthen the net of love and support in our communities.

See pages 20–21 for the 'net' and folding instructions. You will need one copy of the sheet per two people.

Instructions for each pair:

- Decorate the 'fortune teller' and colour it however you like.
- Write in your ideas of what you or your church can do to help make the net stronger in the centre – there are four gaps for your own ideas.
- Cut it out, fold it and play the game with each other.

You may wish to pair grown-ups with children – the children decorate the fortune teller, the grown-ups come up with the ideas and write them in the spaces provided. You can then cut it out and fold it together.

Talk idea using 2 Corinthians 1.3-7

2 Corinthians 1.3-7 (NRSV)

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation, ⁴ who consoles us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to console those who are in any affliction with the consolation with which we ourselves are consoled by God. ⁵ For just as the sufferings of Christ are abundant for us, so also our consolation is abundant through Christ. ⁶ If we are being afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation; if we are being consoled, it is for your consolation, which you experience when you patiently endure the same sufferings that we are also suffering. ⁷ Our hope for you is unshaken; for we know that as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our consolation.

Have you ever tried climbing one of those nets in an adventure playground or assault course? If there's no one else around, it's not too hard to climb to the top and over and back down again. If there are other people also trying to climb to the top it's much harder isn't it? If one corner of the net shakes, your bit shakes as well.

This is what Paul is talking about in his second letter to the Corinthians – and he says it elsewhere as well (eg 1 Corinthians 12.26). If one part of the body of Christ suffers, we all suffer. If one bit of the net is wobbling, we feel it on the part of the net to which we are clinging. Today on Mothering Sunday we are thinking about the God who consoles, the God who cares, deeply, for each one of us like a mother. And we are to do the same for each other. Verse two is very immediate in the Message translation:

He comes alongside us when we go through hard times, and before you know it, he brings us alongside someone else who is going through hard times so that we can be there for that person just as God was there for us.

The Children's Society is campaigning to strengthen the safety that helps families in need. Let's return to that image of trying to climb the net. Not only can we feel the net move when someone else is on it, but for some people, there are big holes in their part of the net, making them feel trapped and unable to move.

This happened to Amy, who is a single mum with three children. After a period of living in a different country, Amy returned to England to find herself in a difficult financial situation. Not only did she have to contend with increased rent, she is subject to the Benefit Cap after giving birth to her third child whilst away. Amy has never found herself in this financial situation before as she has always worked, but she is now unable to work due to the need to care for her youngest child (as she cannot afford childcare costs). Amy did not know what to do or who to turn to for support.

Lucy, a support worker from the local council, recognised that Amy was struggling financially and got in touch to provide the support that Amy needed. Lucy helped her to apply for additional financial assistance to make up the shortfall between her benefits and rent.

Lucy also gave Amy food bank vouchers and vouchers for gas and electricity, and applied for a voucher from a local charity to buy a new tumble dryer.

Amy is still struggling financially and worries what will happen if she is not awarded financial assistance again. It has put a big strain on Amy, but Lucy has been an important source of support and Amy recognises that without Lucy she would not have known what support was available.³

Yet in recent years, the amount spent on council-run emergency funds has dropped by a huge amount, and a growing number of councils have stopped providing this support altogether. So the safety net that was once there is quickly disappearing.

³ Case study taken from Not Making Ends Meet, 2018.



As Paul writes to the Corinthians, we can be there for people just as God is there for us. What can we do practically to help families in our area who are struggling? How can we be there for them as God is always there for us? We have a responsibility for those in our community who are suffering – when their part of the net wobbles or breaks, we can feel it too. What can we offer to strengthen the net?

Let's hear Paul's words again: *He comes alongside us when we go through hard times, and before you know it, he brings us alongside someone else who is going through hard times so that we can be there for that person just as God was there for us.*

Who can you come alongside? Perhaps you could volunteer or donate to your foodbank? Perhaps you could sit and listen to someone share what they're going through? Perhaps you can share your testimony to encourage someone else? Just as God is a loving mother to us, we can be loving like a mother to those in our family and in our community who are suffering – because when one part suffers, we all suffer. When one part of the net is broken or wobbling, we can all feel it.

Small group bible study and discussion on the story of Ruth and Naomi

This section of the resource may be used at a café-style service or in a small group setting. This session should last roughly one hour. You may pick and mix which sections to do with your group – a variety of ways of responding to the materials are provided to meet people's different learning styles and abilities (eg some learn and respond better by doing than reading).

Introduction

If you have the facilities, watch the food bank scene from the Ken Loach film 'I, Daniel Blake'. This is available on DVD or this specific clip is on YouTube (Google 'food bank scene I Daniel Blake' if this link doesn't work):

[youtube.com/watch?v=s_n7o30Ra60&feature=youtu.be](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s_n7o30Ra60&feature=youtu.be)

If you can't show a film clip, read out this story from The Children's Society's report 'Not Making Ends Meet' (2018):

Jo's story

After escaping domestic violence, Jo and her three children had to move away to a new area. Jo approached the local council and was placed in temporary, sheltered accommodation. From the day Jo and her children moved into this accommodation, she was in rent arrears, as rent is paid in advance. The accommodation was also poorly furnished with only a cooker and a fridge.

At the same time, Jo had to change her benefit claim from a joint to a single claim. This meant a five-week wait where Jo had to survive on barely anything. She didn't eat during this time as her priority was to make sure her children were fed. Once the claim had been sorted, Jo then found out she would need to apply for additional housing

payments, as she was affected by the benefit cap because of her third child.

Luckily, Jo has a strong support network in her family and her religious community. Her parents have been able to help financially, and helped to move her furniture into her new place. Jo has accessed no other financial support, and none was offered by the local council. If it wasn't for her family and the support they provided Jo recognises that she probably would have stayed in the abusive relationship, as the prospect of having nothing was too daunting.

Bible reading (Lectio Divina)

Listen carefully as someone reads this passage from the Bible, then take some time afterwards to reflect in silence on what you have just heard.

The passage is provided in the NRSV translation here but feel free to use a different version (visit **biblegateway.com** to find alternative versions). Sometimes it is helpful to provide group members with a copy so that they can read along.

Ruth 1:1-18 (NRSV)

¹ In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a certain man of Bethlehem in Judah went to live in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons. ² The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion; they were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there. ³ But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons. ⁴ These took Moabite

wives; the name of one was Orpah and the name of the other was Ruth. When they had lived there for about 10 years, ⁵ both Mahlon and Chilion died, so that the woman was left without her two sons or her husband. ⁶ Then she started to return with her daughters-in-law from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the country of Moab that the Lord had had consideration for his people and given them food. ⁷ So she set out from the place where she had been living, she and her two daughters-in-law, and they went on their way to go back to the land of Judah. ⁸ But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, 'Go back each of you to your mother's house. May the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me.' ⁹ The Lord grant that you may find security, each of you in the house of your husband.' Then she kissed them, and they wept aloud. ¹⁰ They said to her, 'No, we will return with you to your people.' ¹¹ But Naomi said, 'Turn back, my daughters, why will you go with me? Do I still have sons in my womb that they may become your husbands? ¹² Turn back, my daughters, go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. Even if I thought there was hope for me, even if I should have a husband tonight and bear sons, ¹³ would you then wait until they were grown? Would you then refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, it has been far more bitter for me than for you, because the hand of the Lord has turned against me.' ¹⁴ Then they wept aloud again. Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her. ¹⁵ So she said, 'See, your sister-in-law has gone back to her people and to her gods; return after your sister-in-law.' ¹⁶ But Ruth said, 'Do not press me to leave you or to turn back from following you! Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. ¹⁷ Where you die, I will die – there

will I be buried. May the Lord do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!'

¹⁸ When Naomi saw that she was determined to go with her, she said no more to her.

Listen again to the verses, read in a different voice.

Is there a word, or a sentence, that jumps out at you? Which of these words are important for you today? Why?

Either in pairs or in the main group, share with each other the word or phrase that stood out.

Read through once more with a different reader. Has that word or phrase changed?

Discussion questions

Leaders may like to do one of the following:

- 1.** Photocopy the grid of questions (see pages 27–28), cut them out, fold and place in a bowl. Encourage group members to take a question, read it out and discuss as a group. The randomness of this can help people to open up more than if the 'leader' asks the questions directly.
- 2.** Choose one or two of these topics and discuss them all together.
- 3.** Have small groups discussing one question, then feedback to the group.

You may also wish to write some discussion questions of your own on this theme that will suit your context – some blank spaces are provided for this. Ideally, this section of the session should feel relaxed and informal.

Creative response time

Below are some suggestions for activities to respond to the bible reading and group discussion. You may wish to use one or several of these suggestions, or come up with an idea of your own. Appropriate music could be played to encourage a prayerful atmosphere. You may wish to begin and end with a time of silence.

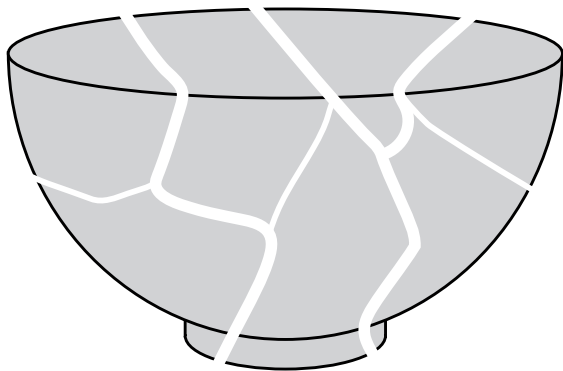
1. Kintsugi craft activity

Kintsukuroi is the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery with gold or silver so that the pot is more beautiful for having been broken.

You will need:

- Some gold and silver metallic card
- Some plain grey or white sugar paper cut into pot shapes (feel free to use the template on page 23)
- Scissors
- Glue sticks

Give each person a pot shape cut from the grey sugar paper. Tell them to cut the pot into pieces, thinking about how their lives have been broken at times. Then each person reassembles their pot, sticking the pieces to the metallic card. The final result should look something like this:



2. Do the Safety Net prayer activity provided on page 14 of this pack

3. Do the 'fortune teller' activity provided on page 20 of this pack

4. Safety Net

Who is in your support network? Draw your web of support. Spend some time thanking God for those people and asking God to show you how you can be part of someone else's web of support.

This session may have touched on some difficult, personal and painful themes for people. Invite a time of stillness so that people can think about something that they have found challenging or an action they need to undertake in response to this session.

Closing prayer

Spend some time in silent prayer praying for the person to your right. Then read this prayer in conclusion:

Lord, lift up our weary spirits

so that we might find rest and eternal peace within you.

May we stand upon mountains and walk on stormy seas.

Give us that unspeakable joy to dance in the rain.

Amen.

Prayers

Prayer activity – The Safety Net

Set up a large net in church – a volleyball net would work well. Have some pieces of coloured wool about 20cm in length available in different piles (feel free to change the colours mentioned below to match the wool you have available). As some soft music is played, encourage people to come and choose a piece of wool and tie it to the net while saying a prayer. Print out the prayer cards on page 25 and place near the net and piles of wool.

Pink wool – A prayer for all vulnerable babies, children and teenagers.

Blue wool – A prayer for all struggling mothers, bereaved mothers and those who long to be mothers.

Purple wool – A prayer for all charities and churches seeking to support families in need.

Red wool – A prayer for those in power to make positive changes to protect children and families.

This net could be draped down the front of the altar so that when people come up for communion they can see all the prayers hanging there.

Mothering Sunday prayers

Collect for Mothering Sunday

God of love,
passionate and strong,
tender and careful:
watch over us and hold us
all the days of our life;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

More prayers from the Church of England

Loving God,
thank you for mums and children
and for all the joy of family life.
Be with those who are grieving because they
have no mother;
Be close to those who are struggling because
they have no children;
Be near to those who are sad because they
are far apart from those they love.
Let your love be present in every home,
and help your church to have eyes to see and
ears to hear the needs of all who come.
We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ
our Lord.

Amen.

Thank you God for the love of our mothers:
thank you God for their care and concern;
thank you God for the joys they have shared
with us;
thank you God for the pains they have borne
for us;
thank you God for all that they give us;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Jesus, like a mother you gather your
people to you;
you are gentle with us as a mother
with her children.

Despair turns to hope through your
sweet goodness;
through your gentleness we find
comfort in fear.

Your warmth gives life to the dead,
your touch makes sinners righteous.

Lord Jesus, in your mercy heal us;
in your love and tenderness remake us.

In your compassion bring grace
and forgiveness,
for the beauty of heaven may your love
prepare us.

Anselm (1109)

Intercessions

God our mother, we lift before you our broken world. We pray especially this day for all mothers around the world. We pray for those who have lost their children through illness, famine or war. We pray for all refugees, thinking particularly of vulnerable women and children. Hide them under the shadow of your wings.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God our mother, we pray for our mother church. We give thanks for our church community that nurtures us in the faith and provides for our spiritual needs. Challenge our churches to be a mother to our communities, help us to see where we can help practically to serve all your children in need.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God our mother, we pray for all those who will find Mothering Sunday difficult. We pray for those who have lost their mothers, those who have a difficult relationship with their own mother and those who long to be mothers. Help us find our rest and quietness in your loving arms.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God our mother, we give thanks for those who care for us, for those who look after us when we are ill in body, mind or spirit. We pray especially for [specific group or people in your community], may they know your loving care, healing and wholeness.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God our mother, you know our grief. We pray for all the bereaved, and especially today we pray for all who have lost children through miscarriage or infant death and those who have lost their own mothers. We remember especially [specific group or people in your community], grant us with them a share in your eternal kingdom.

Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Mothering Sunday hymns

The songs and hymns below are chosen for Mothering Sunday to enhance the celebration by reflecting the day's themes of thankfulness and care. Unfortunately due to copyright restrictions we haven't been able to reproduce the lyrics and music sheets, but we have chosen songs that are widely available.

- All Things Bright and Beautiful (found in most hymn books)
- A Mother Lined a Basket (linked to the story of Moses)
- Brother, Sister Let Me Serve You (by Richard Gillard)
- Beautiful Saviour (by Stuart Townsend)
- Dear Lord and Father of Mankind (found in most hymn books)
- For the Beauty of the Earth (found in most hymn books)
- Give Thanks with a Grateful Heart (by Henry Smith or Don Moen)
- He's Got the Whole World in His Hands (by Tim Hughes)
- Jesus Put This Song Into Our Hearts (by Graham Kendrick)
- Lord of All Hopefulness (found in most hymn books)
- The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want (found in most hymn books)
- To God be the Glory, Great Things He Hath Done (found in most hymn books)

Children's group activities

This year our Mothering Sunday resource is focussed around families in crisis, who do not receive the support they need when things go wrong. They can find themselves without enough money to buy essential things like food. This can be hard for mums and other people who care for children.

Our activities focus on who supports and cares for us. You will need to be sensitive to the needs of your group, eg those who have lost mothers or do not live with them/those who are adopted, etc.

Set the scene

You may want to display some pictures of people doing kind things for others, eg a nurse helping a patient, a parent feeding a baby.

Ask the children if they know what special day we are celebrating today.

Did they do anything special for their mums [or those who look after them] today? Or are they planning to do something?

Explain that today we are thinking about all those people (including mums) who care about us, and how they support us.

Bible story

Read or re-tell the story of baby Moses, Exodus 2.1-10 (see page 7 for full text). You may want to read a child-friendly or dramatised version, eg from The Lion Storyteller Bible.

Think about the story

If appropriate for the age range of your group, ask some simple questions, eg:

- Who cared for Moses in this story?
- Why did his mother need to put him in the river? How do you think she felt when she had to do that?

Response activities

1. Who cares for us?

You will need:

- A4 sheets of paper or thin card
- Pens and/or colouring pencils
- People-shaped stickers (optional, available from craft shops or online)

Give each child a sheet of paper or card. Ask them to draw the outline of a person in the middle and to write their name on it (or use the people-shaped stickers). Then ask the children to think about people who care for them and to draw them around the figure in the middle. Again, they can draw or use the stickers. Encourage the children to think beyond their immediate family or carers, eg teachers, nurses and doctors, extended family members, neighbours etc. The children can then draw a line between themselves and all those who care for them. This is their support network.

Conclude this activity with prayer. Invite the children to sit or stand in a circle, holding the pictures of their support networks.

Use the following prayer:

Thank you, God,
for all the people who look after us.
We thank you for our families
(especially mums);
we are grateful for everything they do.
Please be with them and strengthen them,
and please be with those who have no one
to help them.

Amen.

2. Make a paper Moses basket

If you are good at craft, there are several templates for this online, eg:

gb.education.com/activity/article/Make_Basket_for_Moses/

This one is more of a cut-out picture:

dltk-bible.com/crafts/mpapermoses.htm

3. Prayer activity: The Safety Net

You will need:

- A large net (or a picture of one)
- Four different colours of wool (in 20cm lengths)

Pink: Tie a piece of pink wool to the net – or stick it on the picture of a net – to pray for all mums and people who care for us like mums.

Purple: Tie a piece of purple wool to the net to pray for other people who help us, such as teachers, nurses and doctors and the police.

Blue: Tie a piece of blue wool to the net to remember people we know who are unwell or finding life difficult at the moment.

Red: Tie a piece of red wool to the net to remember babies and children around the world who may not have enough to eat.

After everyone has done this, gather around the net or picture and use the following prayer:

Loving God,
thank you for all those who care for us.
We thank you especially today for all mums and those who are like mums to us.
Thank you for their love, care and patience.
Please give them the strength and energy they need.
Thank you for all those who help us and keep us safe.
We pray for those who don't feel safe, who are unwell or don't have enough to eat.
Please be with them and help us to do all we can to help.
In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

Youth group activities

Who is in your safety net?

Introduce the theme of this year's Mothering Sunday resource, which links with The Children's Society's Strengthening the Safety Net campaign. (Use the information on page 6 to help you).

Warm-up game

Play a 'trust' game (eg in pairs): one person is the 'catcher', the other person must fall back into their arms and trust that the other person will catch them.

Or set up an obstacle course in your space using chairs, cardboard boxes or cushions. Ask the young people to get into pairs. One member of the pair is blindfolded and must rely on verbal instructions from the other member of the pair to guide them through the course.

Afterwards, ask participants how it felt to have to rely on the other person, either to catch them or to guide them through the obstacle course.

Bible reading

Read **2 Corinthians 1.3-7** in a suitable version, eg The Message or the Contemporary English Version. We have used The Message version here:

All praise to the God and Father our Master, Jesus the Messiah! Father of all mercy! God of all healing counsel! He comes alongside us when we go through hard times, and before you know it, he brings us alongside someone else who is going through hard times so that we can be there for that person just as God was there for us. We have plenty of hard times that come from following the Messiah, but no more so than the good times of his healing comfort – we get a full measure of that, too.

Discuss the passage using the following questions:

- What does this passage say about who helps us when we go through hard times?
- How can we help others who are going through hard times?
- Have you ever suffered from 'hard times' through being a follower of Jesus?

Response activity: Who is in your safety net?

You will need:

- An A4 sheet or paper for each person
- Coloured pens

Invite the young people to draw a picture of themselves in the middle of the sheet (or just to write their name if they prefer). Ask them to think about the 'web' of people who care for and support them. Invite them to write or draw these people around themselves, and to draw a link between themselves and these people.

Then invite the young people to think about people who don't have the same support.

Are there ways in which they can support or help these people? Could they volunteer to help at a food bank or donate items? Could they go and interview people at a food bank about their experiences of helping at or using it? (respecting confidentiality).

If you wish to focus on the issue of food poverty for example, you might want to use the clip from 'I, Daniel Blake' – see page 11.

Conclude in prayer eg:

Thank you, Loving God,
for all those who support and care for us.

Today we especially remember mums
and all those who are like mums to us.

Give them great love, strength
and patience.

We also remember those who are
struggling to feed and clothe their
children, and to make ends meet.

Please be with them and inspire us to
do all that we can to help.

In Jesus' name we pray.

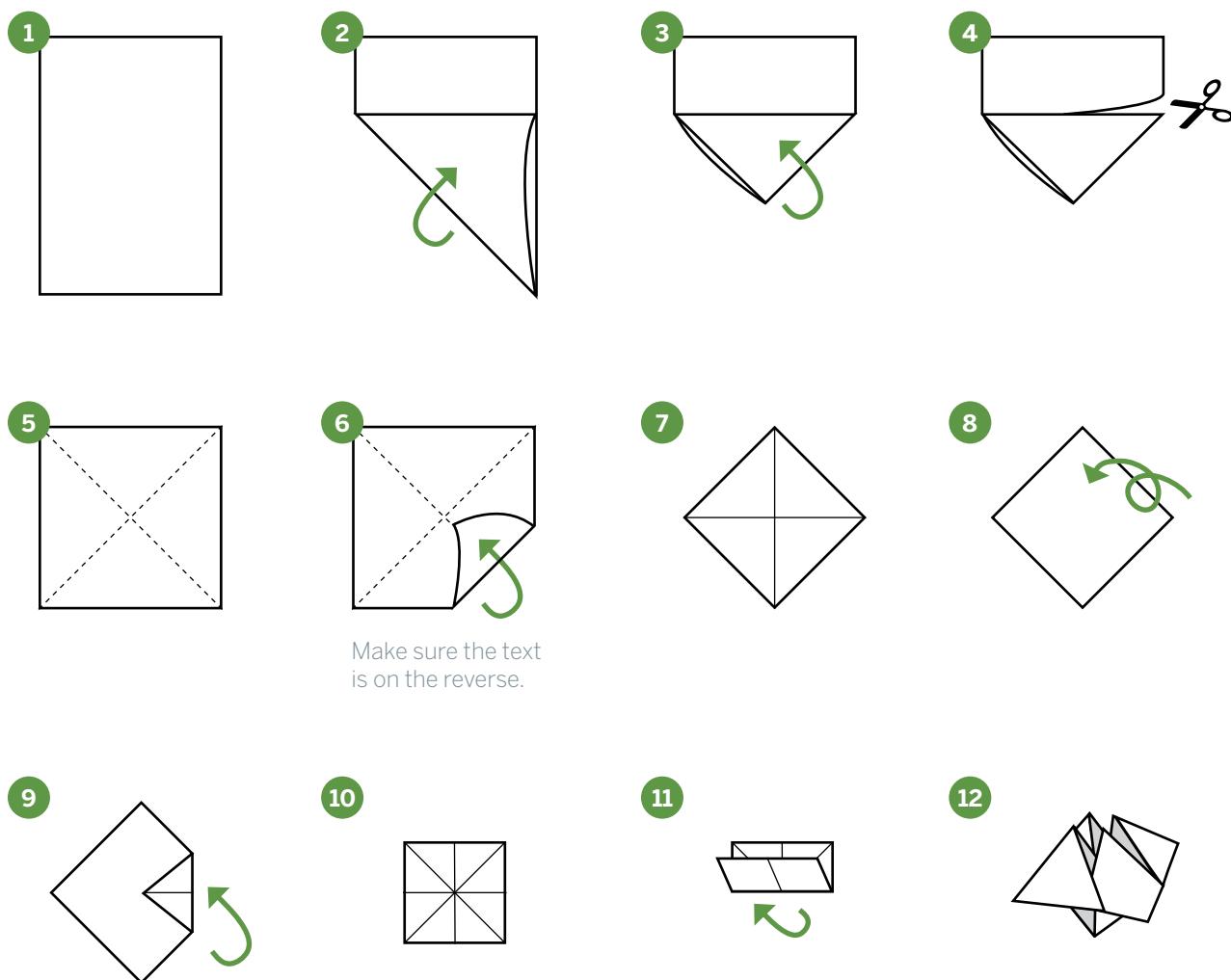
Amen.

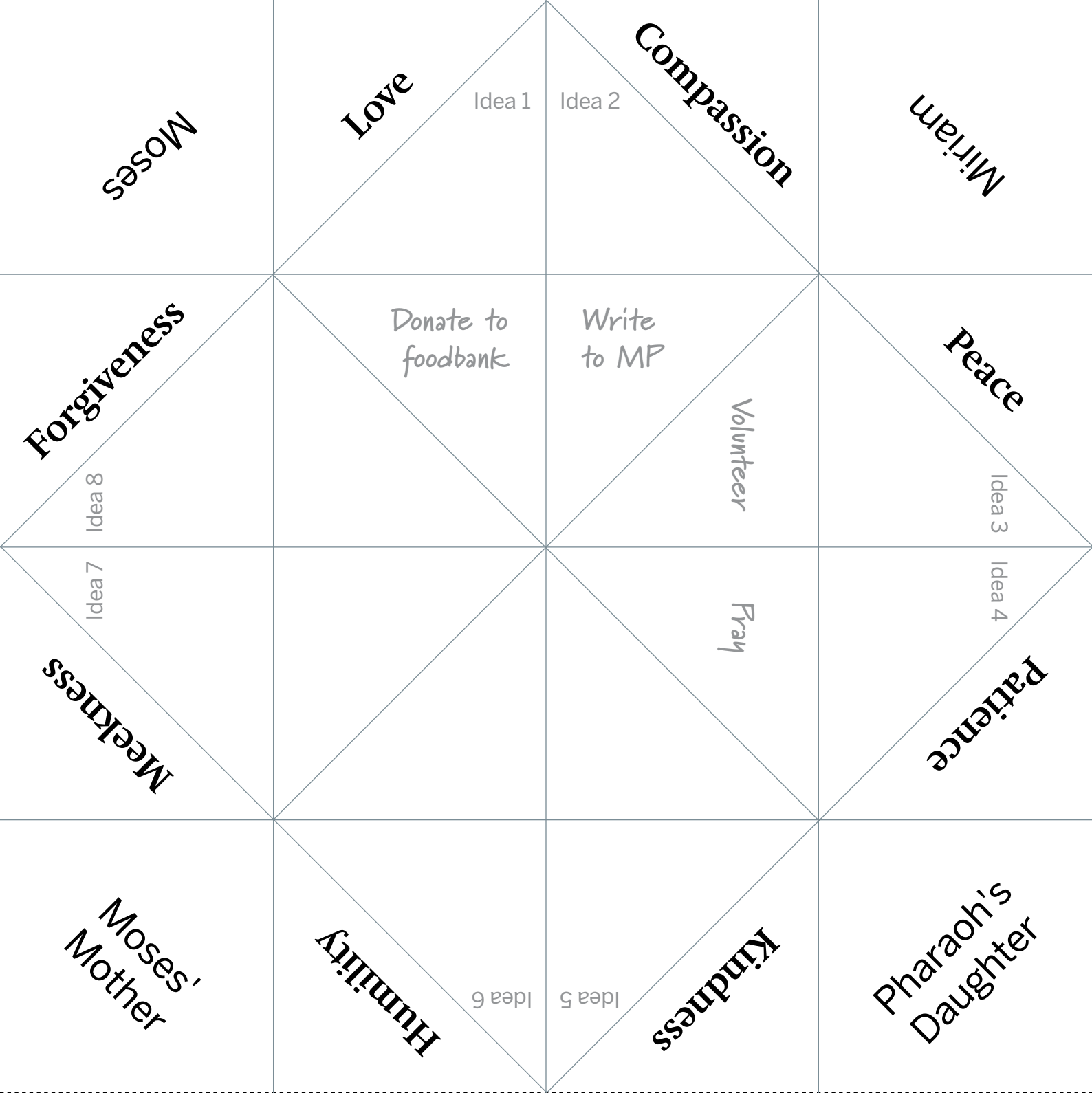


'Fortune teller' activity sheet

Colour me in and, with someone else, come up with some ideas of how to make the net of help stronger where you live. Write your ideas in the middle. Then cut me out and fold into a 'fortune teller'.

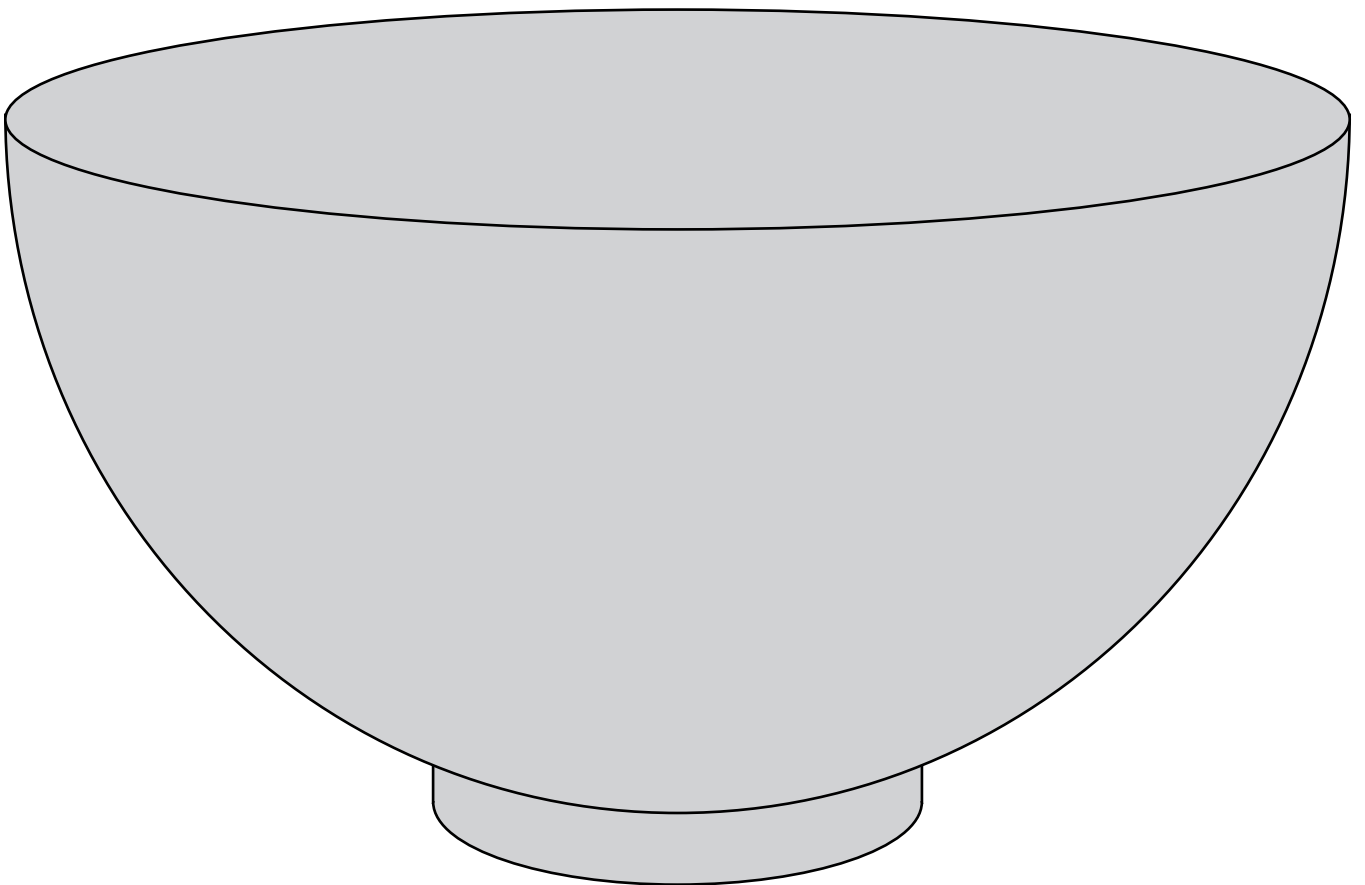
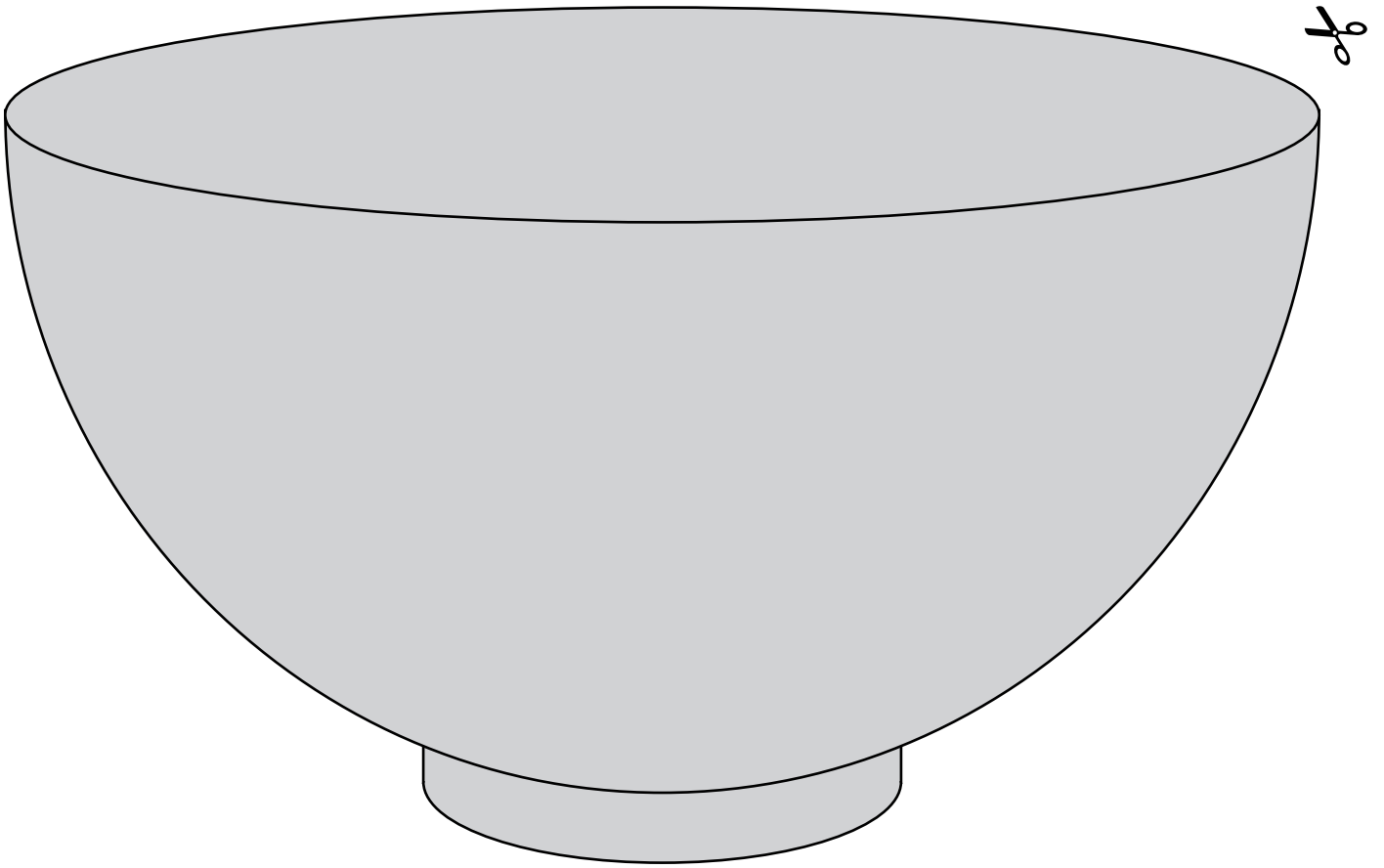
Step-by-step instructions





Kintsugi craft activity

See instructions on page 13.



Prayer activity – The Safety Net

See instructions on page 14.

Strengthening the Safety Net

Blue wool

Tie your blue wool to the net

Offer a prayer for all struggling mothers, bereaved mothers and those who long to be mothers

Strengthening the Safety Net

Pink wool

Tie your pink wool to the net

Offer a prayer for all vulnerable babies, children and teenagers

Strengthening the Safety Net

Red wool

Tie your red wool to the net

Offer a prayer for the government and those in power to make positive changes to protect children and families

Strengthening the Safety Net

Purple wool

Tie your purple wool to the net

Offer a prayer for all charities and churches seeking to support families in need



Discussion questions

See instructions on page 12.



Can you relate the story of Ruth to a modern-day situation?

Who, apart from your biological mother, has been like a mother to you in your life?

Have you ever felt in despair like Naomi does at the beginning of the book of Ruth?

Have you ever had to support someone like Ruth supports Naomi? What did you do?

Who are the key people in your support network? Where would you turn in a crisis?

How can we practically help people in our community who are in crisis?

Should food banks exist?

Have you ever been in a crisis yourself? What helped you out of it?

Do you see the church as part of your support network? Why or why not?

Mothering Sunday was traditionally about returning to your mother church. How can your church be a 'mother' to the community?

Who, apart from your biological mother, has been like a mother to you in your life?

Can you relate the story of Ruth to a modern-day situation?

Have you ever had to support someone like Ruth supports Naomi? What did you do?

Have you ever felt in despair like Naomi does at the beginning of the book of Ruth?

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Should food banks exist?

Mothering Sunday was traditionally about returning to your mother church. How can your church be a 'mother' to the community?

Do you see the church as part of your support network? Why or why not?

Takeaway prayer card



The Strengthening the Safety Net prayer

Loving God, thank you for all those who care for us.

Please give them love, strength and patience.

We bring before you those who are struggling to make ends meet because of illness, poverty or difficult circumstances.

Inspire us to play our part in supporting them, just as you love and care for us.

In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.



**The
Children's
Society**

**No child
should feel
alone**

The Strengthening the Safety Net prayer

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How can you strengthen the safety net of others?

- Join The Children's Society's campaign:
childrenssociety.org.uk/safetynet
- Find out about your local food bank.
Can you volunteer your time or donate items?
- Befriend those in your community who may need a bit of support. What help do they need?
- Pray for all those in your community who are struggling to make ends meet.
Sign up for our regular prayer emails at
childrenssociety.org.uk/prayer



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**Strengthening
the Safety Net**

About the Strengthening the Safety Net campaign

When a crisis hits a family – it could be a house fire, a bereavement, or a boiler breaking – they can be left with impossible choices between feeding their families and heating their homes.

There is a safety net in place for these families when times get rough. It's made up of council emergency funds called Local Welfare Assistance Schemes, foodbanks, charities, and churches.

But that safety net is under increasing pressure as those council-run funds are being closed down or greatly diminished. This is leaving increasing number of families in crisis with nowhere to turn, or having to rely on foodbanks, churches or other charities to get through hard times.

Our campaign is asking the Government to make sure families have enough support when the worst happens, so that children do not have to suffer.

Sign up to our campaign:

childrenssociety.org.uk/safetynet

Sign up to our prayer email:

childrenssociety.org.uk/prayer



Right now in Britain there are children and young people who feel scared, unloved and unable to cope. The Children's Society works with these young people, step by step, for as long as it takes.

We listen. We support. We act.

There are no simple answers so we work with others to tackle complex problems. Only together can we make a difference to the lives of children now and in the future.

Because no child should feel alone.

**The
Children's
Society**

**No child
should feel
alone**

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