

A young child with blue eyes, wearing a blue and white knit hat with a pom-pom and a red and blue striped winter jacket, is holding a lit sparkler. The background is dark and out of focus, suggesting an outdoor night setting. The image has a blue tint.

Let's pray:

January 2023

How can we pray well as we head into this new year?

 **home
for good**



Happy New Year!

How do you feel about New Year's resolutions? Do you have any standout success stories? Perhaps you have more examples of unkept resolutions? I find the concept of resolutions appealing. There's something in the zeitgeist after Christmas that means I'm more inclined to want to make resolutions, although in my experience it doesn't make it more likely that I'll succeed in keeping to them.

The appeal of the change that could happen in my life and the difference it could make is attractive, which is probably why so many of us make resolutions.

As we started 2023, we wrote a blog post that announced that Home for Good would not be making any New Year's resolutions. Despite the opening paragraphs above, this isn't because we are worried we could fail, or because we're opposed to resolution making in principle. But simply this; **our vision is resolutely unchanged.**

As we start 2023, we would love to invite you to pray into each of these three core areas with us, that our passion, commitment and vision would only grow this year in pursuit of what God has called us to, with the different parts that God has invited each one of us to play.

So here are three things that we remain committed to in 2023.

1. Finding homes

We exist to find homes for every child and teenager who needs one through fostering, adoption and supported lodgings for teenagers. We continue to believe that the local church around the UK could make a transformational difference.

That hasn't changed. It remains our number one focus.



Why?

Because we believe in the value and potential of each one of the 95 children who come into care in the UK every day. We long to see them thrive in a community who will love, accept, and champion them. In 2023 we still dare to believe that individuals, couples and families within the 50,000+ churches across the UK can make a significant difference.

2. We love teenagers!

We're passionate about seeing teenagers thrive; we want to see them supported and cared for by a tribe of people around them as they step closer to adulthood. Around one in four children in care are 16 and above and in 2023 we remain committed to finding the very best homes for these teenagers.

Imagine the difference that a mobilised, local church across the UK could make in the lives of teenagers by committing to discover what their part could be. The potential is breathtaking.

3. We stand for justice

Our final, unchanging resolution is our commitment to justice.

Across the UK, Black children are disproportionately represented in the care system. Black children wait longer for adoption than other children and are least likely to ever be adopted.

This is a justice issue. And it's one we care deeply about. We're committed to seeing change.

Why? For so many reasons but rooted in who God is.

Deuteronomy 32:4 tells us that all God's ways are justice; Psalm 89:14 declares that righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne. And God invites us to play our part in seeing justice here on earth, as it is in heaven.

And we believe local churches all around the UK have the potential within it to make a significant difference.

In 2023, we are redoubling our efforts to connect with a greater diversity of church leaders, individuals, couples, families, networks and denominations. We want to rally the church to stand for justice for all children and teenagers, but particularly for children who wait the longest for home and family – and that includes children with disabilities and/or medical needs, older children and sibling groups





Let's remember

One thing that the start of a new year gives us the opportunity to remember.

Psalm 68 paints a picture of a powerful, sovereign God, who's the King of kings, majestic and mighty.

Sing to God, sing in praise of his name, extol him who rides on the clouds; rejoice before him – his name is the LORD (68 v 4)

This is who God is. This is the God we follow.

Yet His power is demonstrated not in military conquests or impressive displays of power as many may have expected (or even hoped), but in His heart for those in need, who are lonely or vulnerable because of circumstances.

A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families, he leads our the prisoners with singing (68 v 5-6)

Following Jesus is allowing Him, His word, His character, His example, to form us more into His likeness. We want to find fantastic homes for any and every child who needs one as part of this.



Let's pray

In the face of overwhelming need, perhaps in our own lives and communities, across the UK and our world, it can be hard to know where to start because of the enormity of it all. Below is a prayer entitled *A Liturgy For Those Flooded By Too Much Information from Every Moment Holy* by Douglas McKelvey (2017). We hope these words help frame and guide your prayers for children and families this month. You might want to use this on your own, in small groups, to read aloud or to silently reflect on. May it stir you to action from a place of peace and security in His presence.

In a world so wired and interconnected, our anxious hearts are pummeled by an endless barrage of troubling news. We are daily aware of more grief, O Lord, than we can rightly consider, of more suffering and scandal than we can respond to, of more hostility, hatred, horror, and injustice than we can engage with compassion. But you, O Jesus, are not disquieted by such news of cruelty and terror and war. You are neither anxious nor overwhelmed. You carried the full weight of the suffering of a broken world when you hung upon the cross, and you carry it still. When the cacophony of universal distress unsettles us, remind us that we are but small and finite creatures, never designed to carry the vast abstractions of great burdens, for our arms are too short and our strength is too small. Justice and mercy, healing and redemption, are your great labors. And yes, it is your good pleasure to accomplish such works through your people, but you have never asked any one of us to undertake more than your grace will enable us to fulfill. Guard us then from shutting down our empathy

or walling off our hearts because of the glut of unactionable misery that floods our awareness. You have many children in many places around this globe. Move each of our hearts to compassionately respond to those needs that intersect our actual lives, that in all places your body might be actively addressing the pain and brokenness of this world, each of us liberated and empowered by your Spirit to fulfill the small part of your redemptive work assigned to us. Give us discernment in the face of troubling news reports. Give us discernment to know when to pray, when to speak out, when to act, and when to simply shut off our screens and our devices, and to sit quietly in your presence, casting the burdens of this world upon the strong shoulders of the one who alone is able to bear them up. Amen.¹



Creative prayer idea

As we pray together this month, we challenge you to source or craft 95 representations of people. These could be toys, like LEGO people, small cardboard cut outs, gingerbread folks or a combination of all of the above. 95 is a big number - but our hope is that this crowd will be a powerful visual representation of the number of children and teenagers who come into care each day in the UK.

Spend some time holding and looking at each 'person'. Use the prompts and prayer points below to guide your prayers. You may want to write or draw on the people, or stick some stickers or labels to them.

- What are you praying for the children and young people who come in to care this year in the UK? Thank God for them, pray and speak out their value, potential and hopes for them.
- Pray for teenagers in the UK, particularly those who have an experience of care. Pray for more supported lodgings hosts around the UK so there are fantastic options for teenagers as they approach independence.
- Pray for individuals, couples, families and churches as they explore what their part could be. Pray for courage, wisdom and conviction to pursue the call