



**Let's pray:**

**September 2023**

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

 **home  
for good**

# Feeling at home

This summer I have had the privilege of spending some time in Uganda. As part of my time there I had the opportunity to work with a local church as they offered support to refugees and asylum seekers from Congo and South Sudan.

Far from my own house and community in Northern Ireland, it got me thinking about the idea of 'home'.

For these individuals, the concept of 'home' must be a very painful one as they acutely remember all they have left behind – such great loss. Finding themselves in a new country, through no choice of their own, surrounded by new people, cultures, traditions and languages must be an incredibly overwhelming experience steeped in pain and trauma. Due to circumstances completely outside of their control, they have no alternative but to reimagine what 'home' now means.

In the midst of pain, struggle and turmoil however, the sense of "home" was still very real. As an outsider who had the privilege of being part of this community for a short time, my overwhelming observation was of a group of people who have supported each other to rebuild their lives, their homes and their families. This home has not been a place of their choosing, but love and support between each other and from the local community mean that it is a place where hope still resides. In the joys and in the challenges, they had formed a family, supporting each other, caring for each other, providing for each other, loving each other. Love, care and solidarity built a new sense of 'home'.

I'm a mum to brilliant children through adoption, and this experience, whilst different in so many ways, caused me to think about their story and what 'home' means to children with care experience like them.

Through no fault or choice of their own, they find themselves in a situation where they have to rethink what 'home' means for them. Home previously may not have been an environment that met all of their needs, but it was still familiar – it was home. Losing your home causes pain and trauma.





Some children and young people have had to adjust to a new 'home' again and again as they have moved from placement to placement. A new house may not feel like 'home' at all. Feeling at home is about so much more than having a house to live in and a bed to sleep in. Feeling at home comes from knowing we are safe, secure, accepted, valued and loved.

For children and young people who have had to leave behind all that is familiar to them, it can take time to feel at home in a new environment. It takes time to trust again, to feel safe and secure again, and to feel loved again. It is difficult to let go of loyalties to their old home – even if that home is also associated with feelings of pain. The role of a foster carer, an adoptive parent or a supported lodgings host is so much more than opening the door to a physical house; it requires time, patience, sacrifice, patience, sensitivity, compassion.

Every child and young person needs and deserves somewhere stable to call 'home' – for a short period while in care before returning to birth family, for the rest of their childhood, for the whole of their lives, even after they turn 18. We know that a shortage of carers means that many children are experiencing more moves than they should have to, or are having to move far away from all they know. We know that there are children waiting too long for the home they need. We know there are teenagers in accommodation that is entirely unsuitable, far from homely.

Together we can work to build a sense of 'home' for these children and teenagers. For some of us that will mean opening our homes and lives to children and young people. For others, God asks us to be part of a community of support, provision and care for those who are building homes. Our vision is to find a home for every child or young person that needs one. Let's pray and trust God that He will challenge and equip us to strive together to create 'home' in every sense of the word.

**“Do not let your hearts be troubled. You believe in God; believe also in me. My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?”** John 14:1-2

**Judith Macartney**, Enquiry and Family Care Team





# Points for Prayer

- 1.** Pray for each child or young person who finds themselves in care. Pray that they will know God's restoring touch as they have experienced such significant loss, pain and trauma in their lives. Pray that they will be able to experience 'home' and know that they are loved, valued, accepted and safe.
- 2.** Pray for foster carers, adopters and supported lodgings hosts, as they open their homes and their lives to a child or young person. Pray that they will feel equipped and supported as they create 'home' and navigate the challenges and the joys.
- 3.** Pray for the Church – that we as God's people will live out our faith in action. Pray that we will wrap around those who are building homes and offer communities of love, welcome, acceptance and support.

## Reflective Prayer Idea

As you pray, take time to consider what 'home' means to you. Think beyond the building itself and reflect on how you feel when you are at home. As we consider these feelings, let us thank God for His provision in our own lives and ask Him to challenge us about the role He might want us to play in creating homes for those in need of welcome.