# Bread Not Stones Worship Service Taking Action to End Child Poverty

*Visit* [*www.united-church.ca/community-faith/being-community/ending-poverty*](http://www.united-church.ca/community-faith/being-community/ending-poverty)*,* [*www.endchildpoverty.ca*](http://www.endchildpoverty.ca/) *and* [*www.childwellbeingalberta.org*](http://www.childwellbeingalberta.org/) *for further resources, information, and inspiration on how your community can join the growing movement to eradicate child poverty in Canada. A special thanks to Wesley-Knox United Church in London, ON, which held a special worship service to End Child Poverty that inspired this service and the suggested anthem.*

**Introit / Centring Music**

**Call to Worship**

What does the Lord require of us?

**To seek justice,**

**to love kindness,**

**and walk humbly with our God.**

Who are we called to be?

**We are called to be the Church:**

**to celebrate God’s presence,**

**to live with respect in Creation,**

**to love and serve others.**

Why do we gather for worship?

**We gather as an outpouring of gratitude and awe**

**and a practice of opening ourselves**

**to God’s still, small voice of comfort, and**

**to God’s rushing whirlwind of challenge.**

Let us worship God together!

**Opening Hymn:** “Moved by the Gospel, Let Us Move” (VU 394)

**Words of Welcome**

**Opening Prayer**

**Creator God, you have made each of us in your image,**

**and yet we fail to reflect your love and justice.**

**You have created every child in your image,**

**and yet we don’t treat every child as a precious reflection of you.**

**We see some children as valued treasures,**

**and others as lost causes.**

**We invest our time, money, and hopes in some children,**

**while we squander the great potential of others.**

**Open our eyes, we pray, to see that every child**

**is made in your image and belongs to you.**

**Help us to love, protect, and nurture all children.**

**We pray these things**

**in the name of the One who came to us as a child. Amen.**

*(CGP 19I004)*

**Children’s Time / Learning Together**

**Gathering Song**

(*sing to tune for “Here We Go Round the Mulberry Bush”*)

***We gather round in this holy space,***

***holy space, filled with grace.***

***We gather round in this holy space,***

***to do as Jesus taught us.***

(B. Ogden, 2002)

Prepare a large chain of 14 paper dolls using mural paper (or large sheets of paper taped together) and have it pre-folded. Unfold it with the children’s help and get them to count how many dolls are present. Explain that the 14 dolls represent the 14 percent of children in Canada living in poverty. Allow some time to let participants think about this as you attach the dolls somewhere visible in the front of your worship space.

On separate sheets of paper cut out in thought bubbles have the following 14 statements printed and ask for help in reading and attaching them to each paper doll. The statements are based on the 14 measurements of Quality of Life from UNICEF ([www.unicef.ca](http://www.unicef.ca)).

• I don’t eat three meals a day.

• I don’t eat protein every day.

• I don’t eat fresh fruits or vegetables every day.

• I don’t have any appropriate books to read.

• I have nothing to play with outside.

• I don’t get to join after-school activities with my friends.

• I don’t have anything to play with.

• I am not able to participate in school trips that cost money.

• I don’t have a quiet place to do my homework.

• I do not have access to the Internet.

• I never get new clothes.

• If my shoes get wet, I don’t have a second pair.

• I can’t invite friends over to my house to play.

• I don’t get to celebrate special occasions like my birthday.

Invite participants to spend some time in quiet reflection thinking about what other statements they might add from their own experience of what child poverty looks like or might look like in your community. Conclude the time with a song and community prayer.

**Prayer**

**God of all children,**

**we come before you bewildered by the fact of child poverty.**

**We come in frustration and shame that students are hungry,**

**that homeless children sleep in cars and church basements**

**because we don’t provide meals at school or build enough affordable housing.**

*[add laments particular to your community]*

**Strengthen us to honour and care for the children in our communities.**

**Help us to place the best interests of children first.**

**In the name of your child, Jesus. Amen.**

*(Carolyn Pogue)*

**Hymn:** “like a child” (*Voices United* 366) or “Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying” (VU 400)

During the song, consider having enough paper dolls for each member of the congregation and have children pass them around to congregants (perhaps as they leave for church school). The paper dolls can act as a visual and physical reminder of the children whom we are called to love. Children may wish to create paper dolls or child poverty dolls during their Sunday school program to be sent to your local members of Parliament.

**Scripture:** Micah 6:1-8 and Matthew 7:7–11

**Anthem:** “Bread Not Stones,” Kevin White ([www.kpwhitemusic.com/Bread-Not-Stones.html](http://www.kpwhitemusic.com/Bread-Not-Stones.html))

*Linda Woods writes:* Kevin White, a brilliant singer-songwriter at Wesley-Knox United Church in London, ON, has given us an extraordinary gift. Inspired by the Bread Not Stones service at his church on February 7, 2016, he decided to take immediate action. Within two days, he had written the lyrics and created the melody to a hauntingly beautiful “Bread not Stones” song. It so captures the plight of children in poverty. Kevin has now recorded the song, accompanied by vocalist Roxanne Andrighetti.

**Reflection**

Visit the links listed at the top of this service outline for information and reflection ideas.

**Hymn:** “When I Needed a Neighbour” (*Voices United* 600), “Long Ago and Far Away” (*More Voices* 195), or “Love All God’s Children” (below)

Tune: L’ARCHE HYMN (Voices United 641)

To wisdom and strength, Lord, we ask you to guide us.

Through life’s ups and downs, through the noise and the worries we hide.

May we hold tight your hand as we walk in your steps

and live your commandment to love all God’s children.

In love with the world, Lord, we hear heaven singing.

We raise up our thoughts to the realm of forgiveness and prayer.

Then by touching your love, we will honour your truth

and live your commandment to love all God’s children.

For hope of new life, Lord, we seek out your blessing.

Bright wings of the angels blow whispers of faith through the air.

With a gifting of power we’re remade in your light

and live your commandment to love all God’s children.

To live not in fear, Lord, we humbly approach you.

Your kind, holy touch teaches us just how precious we are.

In our thoughts we are healed; in your name, we now serve

and live your commandment to love all God’s children.

With joy in our hearts, Lord, the pathway is clear now.

All through and around us you shimmer in love and delight.

By the touch of your grace, we’re in Spirit renewed

and live your commandment to love all God’s children.

*(© 2014 Chris Inrig SOCAN 6370039)*

**Minute for Mission**

Bread Not Stones, Feb. 14, 2016: [www.united-church.ca/feb-14-minute-bread-not-stones](http://www.united-church.ca/feb-14-minute-bread-not-stones)

**Offering and Dedication**

**Prayers of the People**

Holy Mystery,

You speak to us words of comfort and

words of challenge,

words that are subversive, powerful, explosive, and sometimes confusing.

You call the meek, the physically weak, and the downtrodden fortunate,

and you promise that the hungry will be fed

and the thirsty will be given something to drink.

Yet we are surrounded by stories of children who are living in poverty.

Children who

do not have access to fresh fruits and vegetables

(*add examples specific to your community*).

We pray for these children, especially those unknown to us,

as we gather our prayers of concerns for ourselves and for the world and offer them to you know … [*allow for a time of silent prayer*]

We long to see suffering children experience comfort;

we desire that all children who are hungry be fed.

And we acknowledge that we cannot meet these requests on our own.

We need to work with many others (locally, regionally, provincially, and federally) and

we need your Holy Grace.

So with the help and support of each other, and by your grace,

we trust in the promise that has been given to us through Jesus that

he is with always; we are never alone.

With this assurance, God, we pray for the children living in poverty in Canada

and the families who struggle to support them…

In their suffering, may they be soothed by the words of Christ

and by the assurance of the coming Kin-dom.

We pray also, God, for those who are actively working

toward eliminating child poverty in Canada such as (*name communities, people, and social service agencies in your community*).

In their work, may they be encouraged and supported

by the witness of Christ’s followers.

We pray that your kin-dom come to earth as it is in heaven.

And ask that you help us all to be good stewards of our unique and individual gifts by responding to the needs around us with your vision, so that one day

the poor in spirit may know the kingdom of God,

those who mourn may be comforted,

the meek may inherit what is theirs,

and no child will live in poverty.

We gather these prayers together in the prayer that Jesus taught us …

**Announcements**

**Closing Hymn** “Christ has no body now but yours” (More Voices 171) or “Go Forth for God” (Voices United 418)

**Commissioning**

Friends, what does God require of us?

**To seek justice,**

**To love kindness,**

**And to walk humbly with our God.**

And if Christ’s disciples keep silent?

**The stones will shout out!**

May God bless our witness, life and work,

**And may the Spirit guide us in the Way. Amen**

(William J. Kervin, Gathered for Worship (UCPH, 2010), p. 50)