



GUIDE TO

Orphan Sunday

North Ridge Community Church

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Guide to Global Orphan Sunday Event :

Celebrated the First Sunday of November Annually

Example from North Ridge Community Church
Orphan Sunday, November 3, 2013

Introductory Overview:

This Orphan Sunday Guide is modeled after the North Ridge Community Church Orphan Sunday event in 2013 in Arizona. You are welcome to use the elements of this guide as a resource for designing an Orphan Sunday event for your own church.

The term “orphan” presents challenges to some people so other options than using “orphan” can be the fatherless, the parentless, and children from vulnerable situations. However, the global organization is a trademarked name, Orphan Sunday. In reference to the event we use Orphan Sunday but in the text of our presentations we try as often as possible to use other terms related to the fatherless without calling them orphans in each instance. We locally, also, reference Orphan Sunday as First Love Sunday, prompted by the message in 1 John 4:7-11 & 19 that, “We love, because He first loved us.”

(The following Purpose and History of Orphan Sunday is taken from Christian Alliance for Orphans, cafo.org)

On Orphan Sunday, Christians stand for the orphan. We are a people called to defend the fatherless...to care for the child that has no family...to visit orphans in their distress.

Each event is locally led. Sermons and small groups, concerts and prayer gatherings, shared meals and youth activities—each rousing believers with God’s call to care for the orphan, and what we can do in response.

The theme for 2013: “From Many Sources, One Voice” was celebrated on November 3rd, 2013. Thousands of events were conducted across America and around the globe, all sharing a single goal: that God’s great love for the orphan will be found echoing in our lives as well.

Orphan Sunday is our opportunity to bring awareness to churches, our community and friends regarding God’s call to care for the orphan.

Orphan Sunday History:

Many churches and organizations have hosted “Orphan Sundays” over the years. With a nationwide Orphan Sunday, the Christian Alliance for Orphans seeks to add a unified voice and coordinated effort to the many worthy efforts that preceded this year.

The seeds of this united Orphan Sunday come especially as a gift from the Church in Africa. While attending a church service in Zambia, an American visitor was struck by the pastor’s passionate call to care for orphans in the local community, which had been ravaged by AIDS and poverty. Members of the church faced deep need themselves. But as the service ended, one after another stepped forward with money, food and other goods-some even taking off their own shoes and placing them in the offering for orphans.

The visitor, Gary Schneider, was so impacted that he began to help Zambian leaders coordinate Orphan Sunday efforts across Zambia. These efforts spread to the United States in 2003 with help from Every Orphan’s Hope and other organizations. (Orphan Sunday is licensed to the Christian Alliance for Orphans as a registered trademark of Every Orphan’s Hope).

The Christian Alliance for Orphans honors the church in Zambia for the gift of Orphan Sunday. We pray the church all over the world may be as faithful as our Zambian brothers and sisters to reflect God’s heart for the orphan, both near and far. To view the history of Orphan Sunday, we invite you to watch “Zambia’s Gift to the world”. “Zambia’s Gift to the World” video (32 minutes) can be found through CAFO (Christian Alliance for Orphans) orphansunday.org/Zambia-2012/ or on YouTube.

Initial Preparation of our Hearts

I John 4:19, "We love Him because He first loved us."

Our hearts are moved by the love of God, first for us and then from us to the world as we fulfill His mandate to look after orphans in their distress. We must approach the ministry of care for orphans and children in vulnerable circumstances with humility and compassion. We are not only obeying God with hearts to serve the needs of others but to humbly learn from them the lessons God has for us. No part of orphan care should be motivated by our own agenda or seeking to receive personal praise or recognition. "To God be the glory" in our service to the children and families.

James 1:27 is one very clear Biblical mandate to believers in Jesus Christ, "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep one's self from being polluted by the world."

Scripture has much to say about orphans. Here's a list of verses that mention the fatherless and orphan.

Exodus 22:22-24 Do not take advantage of a widow or an orphan.

Deuteronomy 10:18 He defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the alien, giving him food and clothing.

Deuteronomy 24:17 Do not deprive the alien or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge.

Psalm 10:14 But you, God, see the trouble of the afflicted; you consider their grief and take it in hand. The victims commit themselves to you; you are the helper of the fatherless.

Psalm 10:17-18 You hear, O LORD, the desire of the afflicted; you encourage them, and you listen to their cry, defending the fatherless and the oppressed, in order that man, who is of the earth, may terrify no more.

Psalm 68:5-6 A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. God sets the lonely in families, he leads forth the prisoners with singing; but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land.

Psalm 82:3-4 Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked.

Psalm 146:9 The LORD watches over the alien and sustains the fatherless and the widow, but he frustrates the ways of the wicked.

Proverbs 23:10-11 Do not move an ancient boundary stone or encroach on the fields of the fatherless, for their Defender is strong; he will take up their case against you.

Isaiah 1:17 Learn to do right! Seek justice, encourage the oppressed. Defend the cause of the fatherless, plead the case of the widow.

Jeremiah 22:3 This is what the LORD says: Do what is just and right. Rescue from the hand of his oppressor the one who has been robbed. Do no wrong or violence to the alien, the fatherless or the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place.

Hosea 14:3 ... in you the fatherless find compassion.

Zechariah 7:10 Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor.

John 14:18 I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.

See more at:

<http://orphancareresources.org/resource/resource/orphans-bible#sthash.Ow4ahuO3.dpuf>

Scheduling:

The suggested time line for planning:

Since May is commemorated as Foster Care Month and November is Adoption Month these are two seasons perfect for bringing awareness to the congregation for the needs of foster and adoptive children and families. In January or February preparations can begin for an event for Foster/Adoptive awareness in May.

This guide is offered for the purposes of gleaning ideas for the November Orphan Sunday event. Christian Alliance for Orphans and many local foster/adoptive organizations have ideas for May and November awareness events.

In May or June individuals with particular interest and vision for the care and needs of the fatherless can meet with Church leadership to encourage preparations for November Orphan Sunday, be made to bring awareness to Foster/Adoptive issues locally and globally within the church. One effective way to introduce this awareness is the observance of Orphan Sunday, on the first Sunday of November annually.

Plan the Orphan Sunday agenda with the senior pastor and his team. Orphan awareness Sundays can be organized with a sermon from James 1:27, specific prayers related to orphan issues, music, and foster/adoptive testimonials from families, possibly those in the church that have experience with foster care or adopted children.

Elements of the Orphan Sunday Event:

Prayer: Begin the planning for Orphan Sunday with prayer. Pray first and then all the way through the planning in order to listen for God's direction in preparation of the event. In the Orphan Sunday service prayer can be offered from the platform interspersed throughout the service. For example: Open the service with prayer. Begin the message and after introducing the need locally for care for children in foster care, offer a prayer for all foster children in need of care and nurturing in their various living environments and for those ready to be chosen for adoption.

Another example of prayer in service is to invite all of the attendees present who are foster/adoptive/kinship parents and caregivers or those related closely to foster and adoption to come forward and receive a prayer of blessing for them and their families. Prayer can be offered for the Global Orphan Crisis with focus on the need for international care and adoption.

Sample Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father,

On this Orphan Sunday we join thousands of churches around the world to thank you that you are our Father. You have adopted us into your forever family and today we focus on the needs of children who are waiting for caregiving and their forever families.

Before us stand the models of your love as these parents have devoted their lives and resources to love and care for children. Please bless every parent and child represented with your presence and provision for their well-being. You are near to those in need. You champion the cause of those who have no one else to stand with them. And You call us to do the same. Thank you for this great privilege.

We lift up to You the millions of children in the world who have lost their parents to disease, to war, to addiction, to poverty, to abandonment. We ask you to be their defender, their provider, their hope and peace. We know that you accomplish your purposes through us and ask that each of us examine what you have called us to do in relationship to the needs of millions of children and then lead us to be part of the solution.

We pray also for the children in our foster system in America and specifically for the thousands of children in Arizona who need caregivers, advocates and homes. Please move more and more people to love, nurture and support the care of our own Arizona children.

Please forgive us where we have failed and lead us to take up their cause, not in guilt or obligation, but as a joyful response to Your great love for us. We ask you to transform the lives of countless orphans both physically and spiritually and use us in support of the fatherless. Where there are serious challenges we pray for your supernatural intervention for wisdom and healing, safety and security. We ask that the church of Jesus Christ will commit to fulfilling Your mandate to care for the fatherless. We seek your supernatural unity among all agencies and organizations and churches to care for the children and families in all aspects of foster care and adoption.

In gratitude we offer our prayer in expectation of answers on behalf of children and families around the world today.

In the name of Jesus Christ, our Savior, Amen

Facts and Statistics

Facts - Gather and present statistics of orphans globally and foster and adoptive children locally.

<http://www.childrensrights.org/issues-resources/foster-care/facts-about-foster-care/>

<http://www.sos-usa.org/our-impact/childrens-statistics>

Orphans worldwide:

Estimated 153 million, of those 17.8 million double orphans having lost both parents.

Estimated 400,000 children in foster care in the United States

Estimated 1.8 million adopted children in the United States

Estimated 15,000 Arizona children in foster care

(Taken from General Statistics and Facts of Christianity Today)

Of the estimated over 2 billion Christians around the world, approximately 868 million are of the Pentecostal, Charismatic and Evangelical faith. Statistically, of the 153 million orphans and more than 868 million faith aligned believers the JOB IS DO-ABLE to fulfill God's mandate of James 1:27; to nurture and protect the fatherless worldwide.

Sermon

Sermon: James 1:27 is the primary Biblical passage of God's Word used by ministers of the Gospel as a basis for an outline of a sermon for Orphan Sunday. A primary goal of an Orphan Sunday message is to bring awareness within the congregation of God's heart for orphans, with the goal of increased attention by the congregants to pursue foster/adoptive relationships and/or support for foster/adoptive related needs. Determine if the emphasis will be for the domestic needs of foster children locally and foster/adoptive families only in your church or if the focus of Orphan Sunday will include the needs of international orphans and international adoptions.

“The Miracle and Mandate of Adoption”

Nov 3, 2013 :: North Ridge Community Church :: Pastor Mike Burnidge

Video Podcast: <http://media.northridge.org/playMedia/168>

Audio Podcast: <http://media.northridge.org/playMedia/169>

Sermon Outline

The Miracle And Mandate Of Adoption - THANK GOD: WEEK ONE
Orphans Are...

1. A Big Deal To ____ So They Should Be A Big Deal To ____.

Psalms 146:7-9 "He upholds the cause of the oppressed and gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets prisoners free, the Lord gives sight to the blind, the Lord lifts up those who are bowed down, the Lord loves the righteous. The Lord watches over the foreigner and sustains the fatherless and the widow..."

(also Psalm 82:3-4; Exodus 22:22-24; Deuteronomy 27:19)

2. A Picture Of Our _____ Spiritual _____.

Deuteronomy 24:17-18,20-22 "Do not deprive the foreigner or the fatherless of justice, or take the cloak of the widow as a pledge. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you from there..."

(also Deuteronomy 10:17-19; Romans 8:14-16; Ephesians 1:4-6)

3. A _____ Of _____ To Those They Touch.

Deuteronomy 14:28-29 "...bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns, so that the Levites...and the foreigners, the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied, and so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands."

(also Deuteronomy 24:19; Jeremiah 7:5-7; 22:3-4)

4. A Perfect _____ To Extend Big _____.

Matthew 25:37-40 "...'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You...? When did we see You a stranger and invite You in, or needing clothes and clothe You?...' The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of Mine, you did for Me.'"

(also Romans 12:13-15; 1 John 3:16-18; Deuteronomy 24:18-22)

Additional Sermon resources:

Pastor John Piper, hopeingod.org

Bethlehem Baptist Church, Sam Crabtree, Executive Pastor

The Christian Alliance for Orphans

Testimonials

While success stories with relatively uncomplicated and successful foster/adoptive stories are great, be sure to include guest testimonials that focus on difficult but inspiring scenarios in the world of meeting the needs and support for the parentless of our communities. The link to the North Ridge Community Church Orphan Sunday service includes testimonials by adoptees and adoptive parents. (Note link on page 12 for an example of testimonials)

Music

Meet with the worship team to discuss songs appropriate for the theme of caring for the needs of children. The majority of these songs are on YouTube.

“He Knows My Name” by Paul Baloche;

“One Less” by Matthew West

“Do Something” by Matthew West

“The Story of Your Life” by Matthew West

[https://secure.bethany.org/A55798/](https://secure.bethany.org/A55798/bethanyWWW.nsf/0/85F8A3C58884A64C85256F11006E8E05)

[bethanyWWW.nsf/0/85F8A3C58884A64C85256F11006E8E05](https://secure.bethany.org/A55798/bethanyWWW.nsf/0/85F8A3C58884A64C85256F11006E8E05) lists 42

“Adoption Songs” by Karissa Barber

“Life Means So Much” by Chris Rice

“Orphans of God” by Avalon

“This is my Forever Family” by Chuck Kent

“When Love Takes You In” by Steven Curtis Chapman

“Who Hears the Cry” by J Brian Hill

“Children of the World” lyrics version by Amy Grant (good selection to close service with)

“Everything to Me” by Mark Schultz

Video

Every year the Christian Alliance for Orphans organization provides a brief video appropriate to be shown on Orphan Sunday. It can make a good opening for the morning service or the pastor can determine where it fits best in his sermon. Video’s are archived at CAFO.ORG.

Recognition

Acknowledge and honor everyone present who is involved in a foster or adoptive family. Offer a prayer of thanks and support for them during the service. North Ridge asked all the people present involved with or experienced with foster and adoption to come forward to recognize their service and for a prayer of dedication for them. (sample prayer page 10)

Photo Gallery

The state of Arizona through Child Protective Services can provide large full color portraits of children ready to be adopted. They also, have 8X10 size fliers with the child's photo and information about the child so that people interested in foster or adoption can pursue the possibility of adopting a particular child.

Aid to Adoption of Special Kids has photos and information available through Wendy's Wonderful Kids. They also have an online publication of an Eblast from AASK featuring Wednesday's Child which is also featured on a local TV channel weekly. Faces of children help to reinforce the reality of children's lives in need of families.

Agencies

Include local/state agencies that support foster and adoptive children and families. Time permitting; ask some of them to share stories. At the least, introduce them and ask the guest representatives to stand at some point during the service so people can look for them in the booth (table) area after the service.

Invite the agencies to set up tables with information that people can take with them after the service. Tables can be decorated with balloons and other festive creations to create an inviting exhibit. North Ridge used red heart shaped balloons in the courtyard and posted about 15 large photos on easels of children waiting for adoption. The photos were provided by the Children's Heart Gallery. (List of agencies next page)

Adoptive Family Coalition:

Helps to resource post-adoptive challenges of families including funding method for mental health/behavioral treatment not covered by other resources.

Aid to Adoption of Special Kids:

Provides foster/adoption licensing, family support, resources and education to give positive impact on the placements of children in Arizona's care.

AZ Association for Foster & Adoptive Parents:

Support, educate, empower and provide a unified voice for AZ foster and adoptive families.

Christian Family Care:

A licensing agency serving vulnerable children and families in the name of Jesus Christ.

Division of Children and Youth Services:

This is a state human service organization dedicated to achieving safety, well-being and performance for children, youth and families.

Family Involvement Center:

A family-directed non-profit that assists and supports families/caregivers and helps policymakers, agencies and providers transform systems to help ensure that children and youth with emotional, behavioral or mental health disorders succeed in school, avoid delinquency and become productive adults.

Arizona Friends of Foster Children Foundation

Provides funding opportunities otherwise unavailable for foster children and families. For example: music lessons, karate training, a tutor, attending prom, sports team participation fees and equipment can be applied for and paid by AFFCF.ORG.

OCJ Kids

(Opportunity Community & Justice for Kids) through The Fostering Connections project. Providing services for children in over 85 Arizona foster group homes. North Ridge Community Church joins other churches and organizations to support OCJ Kids with donations and volunteer services.

Response Cards

Include response cards in the Sunday bulletin at the service to give people an opportunity to volunteer to pray, ask for assistance with foster and adoptive needs, volunteer to assist families in need and to request additional information about how to become a foster or adoptive family.

Sample Response Card:

NEXT STEP OPPORTUNITIES – THE TASK IS DO-ABLE.

Christians are taking bold and courageous steps to act on behalf of orphans and children in need of families. God is moving the church, the largest volunteer manpower force in the world, to fulfill His mandate for caring for parentless children.

Collect: names, cell numbers and email address.

I am interested in the following:

- Join monthly evening ABC Prayer support group at NRCC or monthly prayer group at Canaan in the Desert.
- Learn about becoming a foster and/or adoptive parent
- Learn how to give wrap-around support to foster/adopt families
- Volunteer to serve in foster/adopt family events sponsored by the agencies represented today at North Ridge...introduce yourself to them in the courtyard
- Get an application for a mental health/behavioral treatment financial sponsorship from Adoptive Families Coalition – if you are in need of financial assistance with post adoption treatment.
- Participate in a service trip to an orphanage sponsored by North Ridge Church and/or visit children in a foster group home.
- Support an orphan care team at North Ridge Church
- Provide babysitting or respite care for foster/adopt families
- Attend a follow-up meeting to collectively and prayerfully dream together of the ways we can help benefit orphans, the children in Arizona's foster care and the families who are dedicated to foster and adoption.

Follow Up to Response Cards:

Review response cards within a day or two of the Orphan Sunday event. Contact respondents to schedule a meeting for those who would like follow up according to their area of interest. Those who volunteer to pray may want to pray only at home rather than attend a meeting. In that case send the prayer requests by email to them or their preferred means of communication after you have met with foster/adoptive parents requesting prayer. For those available to meet regularly determine a place and time to meet for prayer and ask for feedback on the frequency of meetings. The North Ridge Community Church prayer and support group meets once a month.

Foster/Adoptive Prayer & Support Group:

ABC Mission Statement: A prayer/support group at North Ridge Community Church committed to fulfilling God's mandate to care for orphans and support foster/adoptive families.

ABC (Action on Behalf of Children):

North Ridge Community Church Project 127 Monthly Support Group

Prepare for meetings with an agenda, writing materials, and a devotional that is appropriate for the topics related to prayer and the foster/adoptive community. Refreshments are nice and if the group is small arrange the chairs in a circle. Ask the group for prayer requests for themselves or others. Encourage the foster and adoptive parents in attendance to share with the group their stories, as they are comfortable doing so, including concerns and prayer requests. Ask for their permission before publishing their prayer request to the email group. Then after the meeting, email the prayer requests to everyone who responded on Orphan Sunday that they wanted to pray. For privacy send the prayer requests as blind copies to the "pray for you" group. Ask permission of those needing prayer to use their first names only. If they would prefer more privacy the request can simply say "a family" or "a couple", etc. Pray in the meeting for the needs of the parents present and those who have indicated needs but could not be in attendance at the support group meeting.

Orphan Sunday Resources:

The following are some resources that can be utilized to customize your prayer/support group to the specific needs of your church/community:

Orphan Sunday - <http://orphansunday.org>

Christian Alliance for Orphans (CAFO) provides a wealth of information and resources to help with orphan church ministries - <http://www.christianalliancefororphans.org>

Show Hope - <http://showhope.org>

Focus on the Family - <http://icareaboutorphans.org>

Family Life - <http://shop.familylife.com/p-2753-launching-an-orphans-ministry.aspx>

The "Launching An Orphan Ministry" booklets were distributed to congregants at NRCC interested in supporting foster/adoptive families and joining the ABC team. (Action on Behalf of Children)

