**Faith, advocacy and love – talking points for a sermon or discussion**

When we advocate for others we are, in essence, choosing to do the most basic of Christian actions: to love.

When a loved one of ours is suffering, we do whatever we can to help them. And if that loved one suffers again and again because of an injustice perpetrated on them, we will do whatever it takes to remove that injustice.

How we love is constantly evolving and changing as the need requires. At times it is direct help – offering a helping hand to those in need. Other times the focus is empowerment – equipping individuals or entire communities to develop their own sustainable path to improvement. And at times we are called to be advocates, promoting and encouraging systemic changes that address the root causes of suffering. All are good and have their time and application.

Right now, in Canada, we have a unique moment to address the injustice that companies do not need to address child labour and modern slavery in their global supply chains. This is a moment when we can use our voices, our keyboards, and our prayers to support children and families.

For more on “The Problem,” “The Opportunity,” and “Three Ways Your Church can Engage,” please see the *Our Time to Address Child Labour and Modern Slavery* document under Supporting Documents. For background on this issue, see the *Child Labour and Modern Slavery Briefing*.

**Justice and Advocacy in the Bible**

Depending on who is counting, there are between 2.500 and 3,000 Biblical references to the poor and God’s response to injustice in the Bible. One such verse is Proverbs 31:8, 9:

“Speak up for the people who have no voice, for the rights of all the down-and-outers. Speak out for justice! Stand up for the poor and destitute!” — The Message

While we like the emphatic call of God to speak up for the poor, the reality of advocacy today is that we try not to speak “for” others. Rather, we use our voices, our influence, to amplify the voices of those not being heard, so that their very pressing needs are given consideration. It is a fact that the rich and powerful have no problem getting their voices heard in the halls of power. We are called, in places like Proverbs 31 and Isaiah 1, to stand with those whose voices are not so easily heard.

Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed.
Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow. — Isaiah 1:17

**Justice and Advocacy in Church History**

The Church has been an advocate for justice throughout its history. Jesus advocated for children, women, lepers and outsiders of all types. The early Church cared for the poor in such a way that their compassion and action became a mark of distinction.

Christians led the fight to abolish slavery in Europe and North America in the late 1700s and early 1800s. Churches were a committed voice calling for the end of apartheid in South Africa in the sixties, seventies and eighties. And at the turn of the century, churches were a key force in the Jubilee campaign to cancel debts of the poorest countries—leading to changes that have resulted in millions of children in school and receiving health care.

Today we have the opportunity to stand up as the Church in Canada and make history in the lives of the estimated 168 million children who toil as child labourers, working in harmful conditions to produce goods they will never enjoy. Today, we have the opportunity to act on our love for these children.

**Selected Scripture References for Faith, Advocacy and Love**

If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. — John 14:15, 16

… and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? — Micah 6:8

For I am about to create new heavens and a new earth… No more shall the sound of weeping be heard in it, or the cry of distress. No more shall there be in it an infant that lives but a few days, or an old person who does not live out a lifetime… They shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. — Isaiah 65

… let justice roll down like a river… — Amos 5

… though one might prevail against another, two will withstand one. A threefold cord is not quickly broken. — Ecclesiastes 4:12

May [the ruler] judge your people with righteousness, and your poor with justice. May he defend the cause of the poor of the people, give deliverance to the needy, and crush the oppressor. — Psalm 72

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me… he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. … to proclaim release to the captives, …to let the oppressed go free… — Luke 4

Is not this the fast that I choose: to lose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. — Isaiah 58: 6-12