

The Bishops' Harvest Appeal 2025

Rewrite Their Future

Walking in Someone Else's Shoes: Understanding Empathy and Education

Aim: To look at empathy in relation to children living in the poorest communities in Zambia and Uganda.

Introduction

Display various style shoes and get the children to have a look at all the different shoes. If you can put the shoes in shoe boxes that would work well as you reveal them or ask a child to open each box. For example: Wellingtons – a farmer or gardener, Nurses clogs, Ballet shoes – dancer, Steel toe capped boots – construction worker, mechanic, warehouse worker, smart office shoes – teacher, bank manager, lawyer etc., shiny school shoes – child in the UK etc. If you can find some well used children's shoes with holes or loose soles, they would be ideal to represent children in Zambia and Uganda whose families don't have enough money. An empty shoe box would represent the children who don't have any shoes to wear and often walk long distances barefoot to attend school.

Ask them: Who do you think they belong to? Who might wear them? Would you wear shoes like that?

Discussion

Have you heard the expression: "walking in someone else's shoes"? Ask children if they know what it means.

When we talk about 'walking in someone else's shoes', it doesn't mean literally putting their shoes on our own feet rather it means to imagine what it might be like to live someone else's life, to feel what they feel, and to understand the challenges they face. This expression is about empathy—it is a powerful metaphor that encourages us to think beyond our own experiences and consider life from another person's perspective.

Exploring Empathy Through Imagination

Show the shiny and scruffy school shoes and/or empty box again and get the children to imagine having to wear shoes with holes that don't fit or having no shoes at all. Now imagine having to walk a long distance to school in those shoes, or perhaps with barefooted. Consider what it would be like to arrive at school hungry because there was no breakfast, and instead of a classroom, you sit under a tree for your lessons. Imagine at lunchtime there's no food to eat, and when it's time to learn again, you return to the tree without a book or a pencil. While these situations might seem unimaginable, they are a reality for many children around the world. In fact, there are approximately 250 million children who don't have access to any form of education.

The Bishops' Harvest Appeal 2025



Rewrite Their Future

Reflecting on Different Lives

Ask the children “What do you think their lives are like?” What sort of shoes would they be able to wear when they are grown up? Would they be able to work as a doctor or a pilot if they haven’t been to school? Without education, the path to achieving their dreams is riddled with obstacles.

Discuss that we are all the same, the children in Zambia and Uganda are just like the children in this school—they have dreams, hopes, and potential. Their lives, however, are vastly different due to their circumstances.

Mission Direct is working to provide children in Zambia and Uganda access to education. They are building classrooms, science labs, and other necessary facilities, supporting teachers with training, and ensuring that children receive nourishing meals. They help provide uniforms, sports kits, and essential learning resources like pencils to enable these children to rewrite their futures. With our support, these children can dream of any career, knowing that education will help them find the right “shoes” for their desired paths. By understanding and supporting these efforts, we can all contribute to creating a world where every child has the opportunity to walk proudly in their own shoes, regardless of where they start their journey.

Reflection

Think about all the children who don’t have shiny shoes and a lovely school, helpful teachers or even a pencil to write with. Think about all that we have and how we can help. Our efforts, no matter how small, can give these children the tools they need to rewrite their future, enabling them to realise their full potential.

Prayer If you want to make this prayer your own, you can say Amen at the end.

Harvest Appeal Prayer

God of grace and mercy, whose Son, Jesus Christ, demonstrated his love through acts of compassion and offers freedom from the things that hold us back: we pray your blessing on the schools and families of Zambia and Uganda.

May we, your Church, overflow with compassion and generosity as we support efforts to help children to free themselves from poverty through education.

And may your good news of hope and salvation touch ever more people into a relationship with you, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Amen.