

## **Amersham Free Church Partnership in Mission Christmas Offerings 2023**

Each Christmas at Amersham Free Church we support three charities. One is an International charity, one a National charity and the third a Local charity. This year our chosen charities are:

Mercy Ships – Africa Mercy  
Action for Children (formerly National Children’s Home)  
Helen and Douglas House

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### **MERCY SHIPS – AFRICA MERCY**



**Mercy Ships** is a faith-based international development organisation that deploys hospital ships to some of the poorest countries in the world, delivering vital, free healthcare to people in desperate need.

Conditions requiring surgical treatment kill more people in low-income countries than HIV/Aids, TB and malaria combined. Globally, five billion people have no access to safe, affordable surgery when they need it. In sub-Saharan Africa, up to 69% of people live on less than £2 a day. Healthcare in these countries

either doesn't exist or is unaffordable to the vast majority of the population. Fortunately, more than 40% of the world's population lives within 100 miles of a coast – which is why Mercy Ships uses modern hospital ships to bring world-class volunteer medical professionals directly to the places they're needed most.

As well as completing thousands of urgent operations onboard their floating hospitals, the *Africa Mercy* and the *Global Mercy*, Mercy Ships volunteers also work closely with host nations to improve the way healthcare is delivered across the country, by training and mentoring local medical staff, and renovating hospitals and clinics. Mercy Ships delivers a customised five-year partnership model with every country it is invited to support. Relationships are built with the national government and ministry of health, so that the needs of each country are met. In this way, Mercy Ships doesn't just address the immediate need on the ground, but also works to strengthen the country's healthcare systems and drive policy change. The aim is to tackle the root causes of the problems rather than just the consequences.

Founded in 1978 by Don and Deyon Stephens, Mercy Ships has worked in more than 55 countries, providing services valued at more than £1.3 billion. By improving healthcare delivery in every country it visits, Mercy Ships is working to eradicate the diseases of poverty and effectively do itself out of a job. Mercy Ships follows the model of Jesus by “bringing hope and healing to the forgotten poor”, helping people of all faiths and none.

The Mercy Ships crew is led by a team of volunteers from up to 40 nations, all of whom give their time and expertise for free. Mercy Ships doesn't just take doctors and nurses – the ship is a small city, with cooks, teachers, receptionists, mechanics, IT specialists, engineers and cleaners.



The magic of Christmas begins in childhood. Hanging stockings. Sharing festive food. Presents under the tree. It's a time for children to make precious memories.

For them to feel happiness and love – the kind of magic that lasts a lifetime.

But for vulnerable children across the UK, Christmas is anything but magical. No stockings. No presents. No festive food – maybe no food at all.

Action for Children see children who are struggling every day. Children without a bed sleeping on the floor. Families phoning in crying because they have no money for food.

Action for Children have been helping children for more than 150 years. Last year, they helped 765,905 children, young people and families in the UK, through 426 services. Vulnerable children and families given hope and support, because of the amazing generosity of people.

Childhood is short and precious. And this year, we could help a vulnerable child feel the magic of Christmas – a magic that will last them a lifetime.



Based in East Oxford but supporting families from surrounding counties, **Helen & Douglas House** started life in November 1982, when Helen House and the children's hospice movement was founded by Sister Frances Dominica.

As the world's first children's hospice, Helen House has gone on to inspire 49 others across the UK and around the world.

The inspiration for Helen House was a little girl called Helen. Helen's parents took her home from hospital to care for her in her family surroundings. A friendship developed between Sister Frances and Helen's parents and on occasions Sister Frances looked after Helen for short periods to give her parents a break. From this friendship the idea of a small, homely hospice for children sprung. A second home was set up in the name of a young lad called Douglas but this subsequently had to close due to lack of funds.

So Helen & Douglas House provides a warm and homely environment for the whole family coping with the challenges of looking after a terminally ill baby or child who will die prematurely. Parents, brothers, sisters, and grandparents are all part of the Helen & Douglas House family. At the toughest time of their lives, they give families the time and space to enjoy the precious moments they have left with each other. In the midst of exhaustion and grief, they are helped to cope with their child's final days.

The charity needs £3.8million each year. Donations form a large and important part of their funding:

- 85.7% funding from donations, legacies and trading income
- 0.2% Government (Hospice UK)
- 4.9% NHS and local authority contributions
- 9.2% NHS England Children's Hospice Grant

The charity has several shops, including one in Amersham.