

RACIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY 13 Feb 2022

Service prepared by Revd Lesley Martin

Call to worship:

Come to the love of God which embraces us
Come to the words of God which console us
Come to the warmth of God which revives us
Come to the music of God which inspires us
Come to the forgiveness of God which reassures and welcomes
Come to love and praise, to thank and adore.

SF 409 Let us build a house

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gKJgcv8SdnQ>

<p>1 Let us build a house where love can dwell and all can safely live, a place where saints and children tell how hearts learn to forgive. Built of hopes and dreams and visions, rock of faith and vault of grace ; here the love of Christ shall end divisions : <i>All are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.</i></p> <p>2 Let us build a house where prophets speak, and words are strong and true, where all God's children dare to seek to dream God's reign anew. Here the cross shall stand as witness and as symbol of God's grace ; here as one we claim the faith of Jesus :</p> <p>3 Let us build a house where love is found in water, wine and wheat : a banquet hall on holy ground where peace and justice meet. Here the love of God, through Jesus, is revealed in time and space ; as we share in Christ the feast that frees us :</p>	<p>4 Let us build a house where hands will reach beyond the wood and stone to heal and strengthen, serve and teach, and live the Word they've known. Here the outcast and the stranger bear the image of God's face ; let us bring an end to fear and danger :</p> <p>5 Let us a build a house where all are named, their songs and visions heard and loved and treasured, taught and claimed as words within the Word. Built of tears and cries and laughter, prayers of faith and songs of grace, let this house proclaim from floor to rafter :</p> <p>Marty Haugen (b. 1950)</p>
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Prayer: Loving God, draw us together and make us one as a new day unfolds its infinite potential, help us never to lose our sense of wonder and inspire us with the wisdom and energy to put right those things that are bruised or broken in our sphere of life.

Prayer of Confession: Gracious God, in your name all things unite together for good. Hear us as we bring before you the times we have trampled on the feelings of others,

The times we have not shown respect to those around us, or to your created world

The times we have been selfish, have cheated or taken advantage of others, times when we have failed to share with you and with others.

Gracious God, in the knowledge of your grace and forgiveness, help us to forgive ourselves and one another, and to live anew in the light of your love.

LORDS PRAYER

ALL Age ADDRESS

Did you grow up with a picture of Jesus on the wall, or do you have one today perhaps on a wall or in a book? What race was Jesus in the picture? He is probably white, perhaps with blue piercing eyes (as portrayed by Robert Powell on film). If you have seen Jesus portrayed on film he was probably white, perhaps with a bit of an American accent. Jesus was not white, he was a middle eastern Jew with darker features than we usually imagine. I mention this because today is Racial Justice Sunday and the church over many years has delivered a message that “White is right”, white is power. That’s not what Jesus preached. I wonder how many of the parables/stories that Jesus told you could think of if I gave you time to write them down? Here’s a few that spring to my mind without looking it up: the parable of the prodigal son, lost coin, lost sheep, good Samaritan, 2 brothers.... You will think of others. But just those few that come to my mind have a similar message, that in the Kingdom of God everyone is important whatever their race (or gender). All the people who feel and are lost belong in the Kingdom of God. All the people who have been beaten up. All the ones who are not living as they should have another chance. We preachers talk about the Kingdom of God, it’s deeply theological. But put quite simply today the Kingdom is where you and I are meant to be living; Living with Kingdom values of inclusiveness, of forgiveness, generosity. It can be quite difficult to live these Kingdom values, partly because we wait for other people to show those values to us and we moan and criticize when they don’t. Sometimes we know we need to be forgiving and generous but for whatever reason we don’t want to be. And partly we don’t realise that situations occur without us realising it that we are not being inclusive, not remembering that God’s love is for All, but we become blind and deaf to others’ pain and hurt. Jesus was asked “Who is my neighbour”. If you were asked that, what would you say?

Micah 6: 6-8 (NRSV)

“With what shall I come before the LORD,
and bow myself before God on high?
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,
with calves a year old?
Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,
with ten thousands of rivers of oil?
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,

the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"
 He has told you, O man, what is good;
 and what does the LORD require of you
 but to do justice, and to love kindness,
 and to walk humbly with your God?

Acts chapter 10 verses 9 – 17

About noon the following day as they were on their journey and approaching the city, Peter went up on the roof to pray. ¹⁰ He became hungry and wanted something to eat, and while the meal was being prepared, he fell into a trance. ¹¹ He saw heaven opened and something like a large sheet being let down to earth by its four corners. ¹² It contained all kinds of four-footed animals, as well as reptiles and birds. ¹³ Then a voice told him, "Get up, Peter. Kill and eat."

¹⁴ "Surely not, Lord!" Peter replied. "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean."

¹⁵ The voice spoke to him a second time, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean."

¹⁶ This happened three times, and immediately the sheet was taken back to heaven.

¹⁷ While Peter was wondering about the meaning of the vision, the men sent by Cornelius found out where Simon's house was and stopped at the gate. ¹⁸ They called out, asking if Simon who was known as Peter was staying there.

¹⁹ While Peter was still thinking about the vision, the Spirit said to him, "Simon, three^[a] men are looking for you. ²⁰ So get up and go downstairs. Do not hesitate to go with them, for I have sent them."

STF 681 Community of Christ who make the Cross your own

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U1I4i3IOPBU>

<p>1 Community of Christ, who make the Cross your own, live out your creed and risk your life for God alone : the God who wears your face, to whom all worlds belong, whose children are of every race and every song.</p> <p>2 Community of Christ, look past the Church's door and see the refugee, the hungry, and the poor. Take hands with the oppressed, the jobless in your street, take towel and water, that you wash your neighbour's feet.</p>	<p>3 Community of Christ, through whom the word must sound — cry out for justice and for peace the whole world round : disarm the powers that war and all that can destroy, turn bombs to bread, and tears of anguish into joy.</p> <p>4 When menace melts away, so shall God's will be done, the climate of the world be peace and Christ its Sun ; our currency be love and kindness our law, our food and faith be shared as one for evermore.</p> <p>Shirley Erena Murray (b. 1931)</p>
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SERMON *Some of the thoughts from the following sermon are taken from responses to the Methodist Church Daily bible study A Word in Time and also from the Methodist Connexional Office notes for Racial Justice Sunday, Shermara Fletcher)*

The bible is wonderful, over the centuries it has profoundly influenced billions of people. God has worked through it to transform both individual lives and also societies. Alongside its message of redemption and salvation, of reconciliation and wholeness, of the power that the experience of God can provide within us, it has afforded comfort and challenge and the prospect of change and development and an enhanced life. The bible contains a message of unconditional love, reconciliation, peace and social justice that has been the inspiration for social action and reform. This biblical call to social action was taken up wholeheartedly by our Methodist founder John Wesley, particularly in his work of prison reform and the abolition of slavery.

PAVEL Sadly scripture has also been used to oppress and there is a long history of the powerful using selected texts, rather than the overall message, to dominate, to repress minorities and to exclude those who are different in some way. The bible has been quoted to justify the imprisonment, torture and burning of dissenters, homosexuals, witches, scientists whose theories clashed with a literal reading of the Old Testament, and even those who first made the bible available in English. For hundreds of years bishops used bible quotations to argue that slavery was ordained by God, and more recently Apartheid was justified by reference to certain texts.

The Christian message is that we are All one in Christ. Racial Justice is part of our Methodist and Christian Calling to eradicate discrimination in the world that God has made and loved. Racism and discrimination and prejudice should not reside in the attitudes and minds of Christians, but unfortunately they do. It's nothing new. Jesus' parables were often about the inclusiveness of the Kingdom of God, that God's Kingdom is for ALL. As always Jesus knew what he was talking about (!) because he experienced discrimination as a member of the occupied and oppressed Jewish community living under Roman imperialism. His disciples of course also lived under this Roman oppression and a narrow racist attitude towards Gentiles was perpetrated amongst the disciples and in particular Peter. Peter was a church leader who had earned his theological stripes in Judaism. And if that was not enough, he had even spent time with Jesus in the flesh, had walked on water and personally experienced his forgiveness after denying Christ. And yet Peter did not teach that Christ was for all. St Paul disagreed with Peter's racism. Listen to this short passage written by Paul to the Galatians

Galatians 2: 11 – 13 ¹¹ When Cephas (Peter) came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. ¹² For before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. ¹³ The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.

Paul tells of a public meeting in the church at Antioch where he confronted Peter, and the Galatians are meant to hear that criticism of Peter as also a criticism of their own situation; Paul is teaching that the gospel mandates that there is no division between Jew and Gentile, that they should all eat at one table together not two separate tables. Paul's letter to the Galatians doesn't tell whether that dispute was resolved and it

almost certainly means that Paul failed to convince both Peter and the Antiochene church, despite Paul's affirmation that right relation to God depends fundamentally on "the grace of God" and not on observance of circumcision and food laws.

Thankfully we know from Acts chapter 10 that Peter later was given a vision from God that consisted of a large sheet being lowered to the ground and in it were all kinds of creatures and birds, and he heard a voice saying "Get up Peter, kill and eat". Peter said "No", but God told him to a 2nd and 3rd time – echoes of Peter denying Christ on Maundy Thursday around the camp fire.

It seems through this vision and words of God that God was not interested in all of Peter's accolades or church accomplishments but directly called out Peter's attitude making it clear that he should not call anyone common or unclean. This revealed a universal Gospel that was and is radically inclusive. This recording and correction of Peter's attitude in Acts of the Apostles shows that it is possible for the Church to be prejudiced but that it is not acceptable to perpetrate prejudice masked behind theology, culture, church establishment and positions. Peter's correction and revelation also provides hope for perpetrators of prejudice that change is possible, and that God is also lovingly concerned that **all** people are unconditionally loved and accepted in His Kingdom of Grace.

SF 693 Beauty for Brokenness

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uKAXTinhhq4>

<p>1 Beauty for brokenness, hope for despair, Lord, in your suffering world this is our prayer. Bread for the children, justice, joy, peace, sunrise to sunset, your kingdom increase !</p> <p>2 Shelter for fragile lives, cures for their ills, work for all people, trade for their skills ; land for the dispossessed, rights for the weak, voices to plead the cause of those who can't speak.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>God of the poor, friend of the weak, give us compassion we pray : melt our cold hearts, let tears fall like rain ; come, change our love from a spark to a flame.</i></p>	<p>3 Refuge from cruel wars, havens from fear, cities for sanctuary, freedoms to share. Peace to the killing-fields, scorched earth to green, Christ for the bitterness, his cross for the pain.</p> <p>4 Rest for the ravaged earth, oceans and streams plundered and poisoned — our future, our dreams. Lord, end our madness, carelessness, greed ; make us content with the things that we need.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Refrain</i></p> <p>5 Lighten our darkness, breathe on this flame until your justice burns brightly again ; until the nations learn of your ways, seek your salvation and bring you their praise.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Refrain</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Graham Kendrick (b. 1950)</p>
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Intercessions We bring our concerns on this Racial Justice Sunday, and offer our prayers to God for...

- The brokenness of those who are excluded or rejected from community
- The brokenness in relationships between different races
- The brokenness in relationships between different faiths
- The brokenness in relationships between nations
- The brokenness of those who live and struggle with hunger and disease
- The brokenness in household and personal relationships
- The brokenness we carry within our own bodies
- The brokenness we know when death tears away our loved ones

Help us to keep trusting you are there in the midst of all our brokenness. And so strengthen us that we may give ourselves to share in your work.

- Feed us now and evermore
- And feed the world so that none may be hungry
- And all may know welcome and hospitality.
- In the name of Christ.

SF 251 Jesus Christ is waiting https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CSzEviUc_o

<p>1 Jesus Christ is waiting, waiting in the streets ; no one is his neighbour, all alone he eats. Listen, Lord Jesus, I am lonely too : make me, friend or stranger, fit to wait on you.</p> <p>2 Jesus Christ is raging, raging in the streets, where injustice spirals and real hope retreats. Listen, Lord Jesus, I am angry too : in the Kingdom's causes let me rage with you.</p> <p>3 Jesus Christ is healing, healing in the streets, curing those who suffer, touching those he greets. Listen, Lord Jesus, I have pity too : let my care be active, healing, just like you.</p>	<p>4 Jesus Christ is dancing, dancing in the streets, where each sign of hatred he, with love, defeats. Listen, Lord Jesus, I should triumph too : where good conquers evil let me dance with you.</p> <p>5 Jesus Christ is calling, calling in the streets, 'Who will join my journey ? I will guide their feet.' Listen, Lord Jesus, let my fears be few : walk one step before me ; I will follow you.</p> <p>John L. Bell (b. 1949) and Graham Maule (b. 1958)</p>
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LITANY OF JUSTICE

Jesus said, "I was hungry and you gave me food".

All: We see the face of Christ in all.

Jesus said, "I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink".

All: We see the face of Christ in all.

Jesus said, "I was a stranger and you welcomed me"

"I was naked and you gave me clothing"

We see the face of Christ in all.

"I was sick and you took care of me".

"I was in prison and you visited me"

Jesus said, "In as much as you did to one of those considered to be the least important, you did it to me".

May we see the face of Christ in all. We go from here BLESSED BY THE GRACE OF GOD to see and serve Christ in all. AMEN