

Being an Inclusive Church

...and not an exclusive club

HYMNS

PRAYERS

REFLECTIONS

HOMILIES

Racial Justice Sunday

Sunday 9 September 2012

Or any other appropriate Sunday in autumn

Photo: shutterstock.com/ BalazsT

www.ctbi.org.uk/racialjusticesunday

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Further material on the CTBI website includes:

- † an alternative litany
- † a welcome video
- † images for use in worship
- † feedback sheet
- † an order form

See www.ctbi.org.uk/racialjusticesunday

Bible readings

The readings used in these resources are the appointed readings for 9 September 2012 in the Revised Common Lectionary (Year B, related track), which are: Isaiah 35:4-7, Psalm 146:1-10, Mark 7:24-37 and James 2:1-17.

Our Churches have a tremendous opportunity to evidence God's Kingdom on earth by taking deliberate action to include members of Britain's minority ethnic¹ communities in our congregations.

Most institutions find it almost impossible to respond positively to the idea that action is necessary if they are to include their minority ethnic communities, and thereby begin to reap the potential benefits of ethnic diversity. Sad to say, many churches are no different in this respect.

The difficulty some Churches have is in not understanding the difference between allowing participation, and actively seeking the participation of those not already involved. This is compounded by the phenomenon of institutional inertia. Our Churches don't always consciously decide never to change, it's just that most of us in our Churches get comfortable with the way things are.

Whether it's the times of the service, the music that accompanies the singing, tea/coffee after the service (or not), the way the house groups are organised, how the Sunday school is run, not to mention who sits on which 'pew', we are generally more comfortable with the way things are, with what we have become used to. We get familiar with the familiar.

Although there is a general lack of awareness and understanding when it comes to the question of multiethnic Church, institutional inertia is probably one of the most critical factors causing our Churches not to be more responsive to the opportunities Britain's minority ethnic communities present. However, whatever the cause, we believe that the Church would begin to grow in our cities if church leaders were to:

1. declare their commitment to inclusion and ethnic diversity
2. develop programmes to reach out to minority ethnic Britons and
3. teach and encourage Church members to recognise the value of ethnic diversity.

The black majority Churches may also need to face the challenge of ethnic diversity in their congregations and leadership.

Linbert Spencer

¹The term 'minority ethnic' emphasises the fact that **we all have an ethnic origin** and the particular groups referred to are in the minority; as opposed to the majority ethnic group.

The Gathering of God's People and Call to Worship



Photo: shutterstock.com/ BalazsT

These prayers are offered to you to use in ways that are appropriate for your local situation. They can also be used at any time in the church year.

The Gathering of God's people

Leader: Welcome everyone,
Welcome here to Racial Justice Sunday
Welcome, as together we form one little local expression of
God's great Church.

All: Welcome one. Welcome all.

Leader: Welcome, as we bring before God all that we are:
our personalities and histories,
our customs and cultures.

All: Welcome one. Welcome all.

Leader: Welcome, as daughters and sons of our loving God,
sisters and brothers of the Saving Son,
and graced by God's Guiding Spirit.

All: Welcome one. Welcome all.

Leader: Welcome, as YOU, in your individuality and uniqueness.
Welcome, as US, in our diversity and togetherness.

All: Welcome one. Welcome all.

(Optional)

Leader: *You are invited to take a few moments to greet someone beside you whom you do not know. Please share your name and, briefly, give your place of birth, and where you call home. I will indicate the end of this period with...*

(Suggest an action with which your congregation will be familiar. Continue when all are still again)

Leader: Now, before the Father,
as one in Christ
and all inspired by the Holy Spirit:

All: Together, let us worship the Lord.

Leader: In penitence, praise and petition:

All: Together, let us worship the Lord.

Leader: In word and song and music:

All: Together, let us worship the Lord.

Leader: Aloud, in listening and in silence:

All: Together, let us worship the Lord.
(Followed by gathering hymn/song)

Call to Worship

Leader:

Welcome, everyone.
Welcome here to this special event

We gather as one local worshipping community,
just one small part of the whole People of God,
one wonderful snapshot of the rich diversity of Jesus'
followers today.

We represent just some of the colours and customs,
backgrounds and cultures, histories and traditions that together
form the Church.

United in our faith in Christ we seek to be ever more united in our witness to
Jesus' message:

of love for all persons,
compassion for all who suffer
and service to all in need
especially those who are oppressed or discriminated against
in our churches or our society.

Together let us worship the Lord.

We gather in penitence, praise and petition.
We gather to be nourished and refreshed, to rejoice and celebrate.
We gather to be challenged and encouraged to greater
acceptance and love for those whom we might at first find
'different', but who are our sisters and brothers in Christ.

We gather in order to go out again into our daily lives
Inspired by our sense of unity and community
to give better witness to our Christian faith for the good of all of
our society.

Loving God, Saving Son, Guiding Spirit, Great Trinity of Love;
accept our prayers as we gather here in worship today
seeking to be one in faith and practice.

We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and our Brother.

All: Amen.

Francis Aloa

Mark 7:24-30 (NRSV)**The Syrophoenician Woman's Faith**

From there he set out and went away to the region of Tyre. He entered a house and did not want anyone to know he was there. Yet he could not escape notice, but a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit immediately heard about him, and she came and bowed down at his feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, of Syrophoenician origin. She begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. He said to her, 'Let the children be fed first, for it is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs.' But she answered him, 'Sir, even the dogs under the table eat the children's crumbs.' Then he said to her, 'For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter.' So she went home, found the child lying on the bed, and the demon gone.



Photo: shutterstock.com/VladisChern

Jesus in a Corner

Since this hymn is based on Mark 7 24-30 it is recommended that the reading is heard first or the story mentioned so that the congregation gain the most from singing it.

(For a selection of other hymns go to www.ctbi.org.uk/racialjusticesunday)

Tune: Penlan (In Heavenly Love Abiding) or Aurelia (The Church's One Foundation)

1. Unwanted interruption
Disturbing hard won peace;
A pressure put upon you
Just when you'd found release;
This woman and her anguish
Intrude with honest pain,
Demanding understanding-

Though, seemingly, in vain

2. Did pressures of the moment
Prevent a kind reply-
Upwellings of raw anger
Resist, refuse, deny?
Or did your people's story
Of holiness apart
Constrict your way of seeing,
Exclude her from the start?
3. Still, somehow, all undaunted,
She would not be denied-
No sharp-tongued, bitter rudeness
Could push her hope aside.
Persistently and wisely,
She turned your words around;
She cut through your resistance
Claimed crumbs could still be found.
4. And so two healings happened-
Her daughter was set free-
But with new understanding
you surely came to see
that grace and loving kindness,
if true to what God meant
must reach to all who need them
show limitless intent.
5. Thank God, then, for that woman
And what she did for you,
The healing she enabled
Must touch us, change us too.
When prejudiced or stubborn,
Or drained of all our good,
Then may we too know healing
To live the way we should.

Words by John M Campbell

We are One

A Song for Racial Justice Sunday 2012

1. We are gathered to worship;
We are joined by your love;
We belong to the family
Of our Father above.
Beautiful diversity,
Worshiping in liberty,
Yet we find unity
In your name.

Chorus: Jesus, you have prayed your people would be one;
We have prayed to see your Kingdom come,
Your will be done, here on earth as it is in heav'n.
Jesus, help us be the answer to your prayer;
May we be united as we share
Every blessing you pour out on us;
As we are one in you, Jesus.
(after last chorus, to end – May we be one in you Jesus)

2. Chosen, called and invited
From each nation and tongue.
Every culture united
By the blood of the Son.
We are one human race;
Through your love, by your grace
May we find unity
In your name.

Bridge: There is one church;
Christ has one body;
Here on the earth
We're his hands, his feet, his lips;
Called to the world;
To go in his name.

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Please go to www.ctbi.org.uk/racialjusticesunday to download music for this song.

Prayers of Approach, Confession and Thanks



These prayers and prayer activities have been written for use on Racial Justice Sunday but can also be used anytime during the year. If you would like to adapt these prayers and prayer activities to your needs for a local or general situation please feel free to do so.

Prayers of Approach

Creator God
Who so lovingly made this world;
You are Magnificent.
Awesome and Powerful,
Glorious, Almighty,
Compassionate, Forgiving,
Generous and Kind,
Loving, God.

We are all your children, made in your image.
Each one unique, special and different.

We praise your name forever
Most magnificent.
Awesome and Powerful,
Glorious, Almighty,
Compassionate, Forgiving,
Generous and Kind,
Loving, God.

Amen



PRAYER ACTIVITY

Invite the congregation to make passports*. They need to write where they were born, nationality and ethnic origin. Under each of these three headings the writer can write a concern taking place in that town/city/country, eg:



BORN:	London	CONCERN:	Young People's voice not being heard
NATIONALITY:	British	CONCERN:	Poverty
ETHNIC ORIGIN:	Jamaican	CONCERN:	Drugs & Gangs

Once these passports have been made the congregation is free to keep them and take them home for prayer or to swap them and pray with them at home.

Prayers of Confession

PRAYER ONE

Creator God
Who so lovingly made this world
Forgive us for not loving each other as we should.

When we stereotype people because of the colour of their skin;
God, **Forgive Us**
When we dismiss someone's voice just because we do not
understand their accent;
God, **Forgive Us**

When we judge others because they are not like us;

God, **Forgive Us**

When we let past experiences cloud our judgment;

God, **Forgive Us**

When we are bullied into racism by the media;

God, **Forgive Us**

When we fail to learn more about other cultures;

God, **Forgive Us**

When we do not speak up for our brothers and sister who are
subject to racism;

God, **Forgive Us**

Silence

Brothers and Sisters

Know that when we confess our sins and the sins of this world in Jesus name

We are forgiven

Thanks be to God.

Amen.

PRAYER TWO

Father God

We are truly sorry for all our thoughts and actions that have not best
pleased you.

We take a moment now to lift before you our prayers

[One minute silence]

Forgiving God

Strengthen us in our weakness

Guide us in our confusion

And bless us with wisdom as we continue to fight the battle against
discrimination and win the war for Racial Justice.

In Jesus' name we pray

Amen.

PRAYER ACTIVITY

Take a world map and put it on a table/floor. Place on top of it a clear bowl of water. Invite the congregation to take pebbles that represent sin/prayer for forgiveness and place it in the bowl of water. As the pebble sinks to the bottom of the bowl, focus on a part of the world (via the clear bowl of water) where this sin/prayer of forgiveness needs to be reconciled with God. There could be a series of these prayer bowl stations around the worship space to facilitate a large group or congregation.



Map: shutterstock.com/Volina

Prayers of Thanks

Loving God

We are all wonderfully made in your image

Help your world to see you in each face

To see that each person has value

Each person has a heart

Each person has a name

We thank you for all your people who work tirelessly to bring racism to an end

In Jesus name we pray

Amen

PRAYER ACTIVITY

Thank You Cards*

Encourage the congregation to make/write thank you cards for God in terms of racial justice.

Once written invite the congregation to either bring their cards to the front and place in a basket, take them home and pray over them (maybe place them in their bible, on their fridge or desk at work) or to swap them with someone in the congregation to take home and pray with.



Prayer Focus Ideas

- † Play 'The Black Eyed Peas' song "Where is the Love?" to open up a discussion topic or it can be played as a reflection song.
- † Put pictures up around the worship space that illustrate ethnicity, different cultures, nationalities and stories of racial justice and injustice.
- † Put newspaper articles up around the worship space that illustrate ethnicity, nationalities, different cultures and stories of racial justice and injustice, e.g. racism in football, young people in hoodies.
- † BBC News (if it's not too much of a distraction) maybe have BBC news on silent in the background on a TV. This can illustrate how world news/racism/injustice takes place all the time but sometimes we ignore it, are deaf to it or even refuse to listen. *(If you have a foyer or reception area you could play it in there.)*

Other Ideas

WORLD FOOD | Bring & Share Lunch (after the service)

Invite the congregation to bring/cook food from their own cultures or food they like from other countries.

Sanya Strachan

Notes

*The thank you cards and passport just need the maker to fold an A4 piece of paper in half and then half again until it is a quarter of its original size (A6).

Photos above (left to right): Racism in football - 'There is more to learn' campaign (Dominic Jacques-Bernard); portrait of a Chinese lady (fab to pix); former refugees Leila Toplic of Microsoft from Bosnia and David Livingstone from Uganda (© Thomas Williams/Crossroads Foundation); singer-songwriter Tracey Chapman (photo by Jurvetson, flickr); and US President Barack Obama (photo by Jurvetson, flickr).



Photo: Arthur Fellig

Psalms 146: 1-10 Praise the Lord

“Praise the Lord!” This is one of the many psalms that begins and concludes with this refrain. Praise is a life-long habit for this psalmist. Praise is not just the aim of life, but life is praise. Commentators have noted that the call to praise is reinforced by the abundant references to the covenant name of the Lord throughout the psalm (Yahweh, eleven times and El/Elohim four times).

Praise, for the psalmist, is oriented towards the God of all creation, while calling humans away from any enslavement to earth-bound leaders and tendency to live as if they are immortal. Praise, however, is not only directed to God’s mighty deeds: it also despairs over human failures to practice righteousness. God is given all of the credit for executing justice on behalf of the oppressed, for feeding the hungry, for setting prisoners free, for opening the eyes of the blind, etc. So where justice is concerned, we ought to put our trust in the Lord and not “in princes, in mortals.”

With the psalmists we too, in spite of restrictive patterns of behaviour that exclude many from our communities, live out our lives continually in the presence of God who blesses us with the gift of life and salvation each waking day. The habit of praise runs counter to the dominant script of scarcity and the tendency to restrict God’s offer of abundant life to all humankind.

Abraham Heschel reminds us that “The secret of spiritual living is the power to praise. Praise precedes faith. First we sing then we believe”*. This is a timely reminder on Racial Justice Sunday. In spite of the restrictive and

ungenerous habits that deny the humanity of others, we must deepen the habit of praise as a tool to overthrow injustices. Gratitude and generosity are necessary habits that witness to the one in whom is our hope and life. Praise the Lord!

For reflection

1. Consider the implications of living a life of constant praise and thanks giving as a fundamentally different way of seeing our world, our priorities, and lifestyles.
2. Reflect on the choice we need to make between a life dominated by a consumer/market world or one that trusts in God's faithfulness and generosity. The choice here is between two different kinds of action (not between action and passivity).

Michael Jagessar

*A. J. Heschel, (p.61 of *Who Is Man?*, Stanford University Press, 1965)

James 2: 1-17

Do our words and actions include or exclude?



Photo: Flavio

Martin Luther may have missed the point of James's letter when he referred to it as an "epistle of straw". The bottom line for James is that we are all accountable to God for our words and deeds. What do our words and actions say of God's love, grace and generosity? Is the faith that influences our actions modelled after the way of God in Christ?

The author of James is concerned about an understanding of faith that distorts and restricts faithfulness. Faith becomes dead when reduced to a series of statements that Christians profess to believe. Faith is inseparable from faithfulness.

Starting with a query about what faith actually is, James uses the social class of the time as the key issue to explore the question. He exposes the prevailing human tendency to defer to those who are visibly wealthy while dismissing those at the lower end of social standing. Wealth and influence are used as markers with the implications that those for whom these are favourably stacked expect to be the insiders and to receive certain privileges.

By uncovering the excluding pattern of classism and related acts of snobbery, prejudice and favouritism, James' challenge went beyond the "logic" that the wealthy person is good and the poor person is bad. Pointing back to the central teaching of faith as demonstrated by Jesus: "Love your neighbour as yourself" (v.8), James puts his listeners (and audience) in an uncomfortable position by underscoring that belief in Jesus must be seen in the practice of the command to love one's neighbour, especially the poor. To ignore the poor is to dishonour God.

In the process, James tackles head-on the problem of discrimination in the Christian community, maintaining that faith in Jesus Christ bears directly upon our treatment of persons. All excluding habits based on social ordering that privileges the rich is a betrayal of the way of Jesus.

It is not insignificant that James speaks of "acts of favouritism". By employing the plural he calls to account all forms of prejudice and discrimination based on outward appearances such as disability, ethnicity, class, gender, age, sexuality, dress etc.

James has much to contribute to our thinking about acts and experiences of discrimination and exclusion. For James discrimination of any kind is inconsistent with Christian faith! And, to work towards justice is a calling Christians cannot pursue by their own strength. We are not alone: it is God's gracious presence and power and wisdom that makes it possible for us to live as James describes.

For reflection

1. Reflect on what your actions suggest about your faith and Jesus' way.
2. James wants the good news to be experienced—by each believer and through each believer to the many others who need a tangible expression of grace. Is it possible that James may be reframing the question: "Where is the good news for your neighbour?"
3. What has gone wrong in our life together for prejudices and excluding habits, rather than the preferences of God, to be manifested among us?

Michael Jagessar

Isaiah 35, 4-7



Photo: Guillaume Baviere

This is a joyful prophecy of restoration from an unlikely place. Here we are in Judah, the southern of the Israelite kingdoms, centred on Jerusalem. But many of the people are in exile in Babylon, and Jerusalem is a fearful and despairing city, defeated and without direction. At the heart of Isaiah is a profound sense of the sovereignty of God and the moral holiness of God; this is a God who desires justice and right relationship, and the people have had their sins of corruption, oppression of the poor and religious complacency read back to them in the most forthright terms imaginable. But the God who speaks in and to Isaiah is also a God of compassion, a God who cares, and here is a word of hope and promise in the darkest of times.

It is a poem that describes the homecoming of those who have suffered terribly through long years. But they will not return by the long caravan route; rather, they will be led home directly across the desert. These would not appear at first to be promising words; for those who lived in that part of the world, the desert was a dangerous, featureless place of shifting sands, where wild animals lurked, where there was no shelter, a place of vulnerability and exposure to the elements. It was a place of death.

But in the presence and glory of the living God, even the desert will be transformed. The mirages of the desert will become real pools of water, grass will grow, and a fearful road will become a way on which all will travel safely. Their condition will be utterly changed. This is not a spiritualized prophecy; it is the good news of God's deliverance for those who were in despair. The captives in Babylon will return home, the land will be renewed. It is a promise to hearten and encourage. In the words of Isaiah, so often used by Jesus, 'Be strong. Don't be afraid.'

For reflection

1. What does 'homecoming' suggest or mean to us? What images and feelings does the word evoke? How do we think about coming home to or with God?
2. What do we think 'homecoming' might mean to uprooted people-refugees, exiles, those who are landless or homeless? How might we better align ourselves with the God who brings the exiles home?

Kathy Galloway

Mark 7, 24-37

Here is a story that points us firmly towards mission in Christ's way. It takes place near Decapolis on the fringes of Galilee, outside Israel, the margins of the holy land and people. Jesus has returned from another border place, from Tyre (in present day Lebanon), Gentile territory, where his decision to listen and respond to the impassioned plea of a Syro-Phoenician woman to heal her sick daughter has moved his own journey beyond the respectable

heartland of established belief and practice. Jesus has already demonstrated that religious custom, such as Sabbath observance, should not stand in the way of responding to human need. Now, challenged by a woman's faith to see that ethnic and social conventions should not do so either, he re-examines his own mission. From this point onwards, Jesus understands that he has been sent, not just to the people of Israel but also to the Gentiles. He has crossed a border, not only of geography, but of the heart and spirit. His mission has become inclusive.

Now, a man who is deaf and can hardly speak has been brought by his friends in the hope that Jesus can heal him also. The first thing that Jesus does is to take the man away on his own; people with hearing difficulties find it particularly hard to communicate in crowds. Then he uses the language of touch to explain to the man what he is going to do; finally, he speaks a word in Aramaic, Ephphatha, 'be opened', which is perfect for lipreading.

Jesus has recognised the man's situation, responded appropriately to his needs and enabled him to be fully present and involved in his healing. The man is able to hear and speak, no longer marginalized by his community. Mark uses a word to describe his speech impediment that is only used in one other place in the Bible, in Isaiah 35,6 - 'those who cannot speak will shout for joy.' It is an echoed testimony to the healing and liberating power of the Messiah and an invitation to us to also 'be opened' to the word of life.

For reflection

1. Have we, or people we are close to, experienced exclusion for who we are? How did this affect us? In what ways was this exclusion overcome, or in what ways could it have been?
2. What would it involve for us, and for our churches, to respond appropriately to the needs of others in ways which are empowering and inclusive? How do we think we need to 'be opened'?

Kathy Galloway



Photo: shutterstock.com/ BalazsT

Being an Inclusive Body, Not an Exclusive Club

Two millennia before the murder of Stephen Lawrence, a hate-crime that brought us as a nation face-to-face with racism in our country, the apostles Paul and James trumpeted Christianity's zero tolerance policy on racism: see Colossians 3:11 and James 2:1-9.

The Lawrence Inquiry gave us Macpherson's now famous definition of Institutional Racism: "The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racial stereotyping." As a nation we were chastened and our institutions vowed to do better.

Christianity, which regrettably has become an institution, isn't beyond the need for self-examination on this subject.

As Christians we're not seeking or offering membership to an exclusive club called the church, we are members of an inclusive body called Christ. Were Christianity ever to reduce "church" to being somewhere we go, rather than being who we are, we'd be on the slippery religious-slope to excluding some and including others and judging some to be worthy and others unworthy. Before we could say, "Christ died for all" the organism would be an organisation; the movement a monument; and a vivifying relationship a stultifying religion. Christianity would be no more than Churchianity, a place where racism could be cultivated.

In reading his verdict, Mr Justice Treacy said that Stephen Lawrence had been “swallowed up” by his attackers I am reminded that Jesus Christ was also “swallowed up” by his attackers in a grace-hate crime. They’ll be no inquiry or cold case review but as a community we should vow to do better. We know that salvation is by grace not race, so let’s embrace gracism - **God’s Ridiculous Agape Captivating Everyone.**

Paul Anderson-Walsh

Everything before BUT is...

We are all accustomed to the smooth tones of political or financial spokespeople who will wax lyrical about this or that situation. They tell us how good or bad things are and what they are doing to counter what their predecessors did or did not do. There is always that point at which they get to the BUT moment. BUT we are in the middle of a financial crisis... BUT we are restricted in what we are allowed to do... BUT it’s not our fault... BUT... With this one little word, whatever has been said or promised before can be excused or sidelined. The BUT word allows them and us off the hook. It allows accountability and action to be offset.

With Jesus, there are no ifs or buts or maybe’s. NOW is the time for action, NOW is the time for love and compassion and humility and service. Justice is to be delivered in the here and now. Justice is to be pursued today in our relationships. Jesus teaches about the cost of discipleship when in Luke’s Gospel someone says “I will follow you, Lord; BUT let me first say farewell to those at my home”. Jesus said to him “No one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.”



So it is with issues of Racial Justice. It’s easy and we are accustomed to offering the soothing BUT... which leaves those who are treated unjustly, those who are abused and ridiculed because of their race or colour or gender to remain in that place. God’s justice demands that we proclaim God’s justice now, without the BUTs and the excuses or the platitudes. We are called to act justly NOW.

Bob Fyffe

A Litany for Narrator, People and Chorus



Photo: Alex Proimos

How long, O Lord, how long?

Narrator: And the people came
They came to the House of the Lord,
Called by the one who loves,
Loves beyond any kind of measure,
Loves all and each as part of the Almighty's design.
They came.

People: We came and we found
That all did not love.
That loving meant including only those who looked like them.
That loving was measured.
That the creator's design did have limits.

Chorus: *How long O Lord, How long must we wait?
Waiting at the door,
Walking in the streets,
Huddled where we cannot be seen?*

People: We came and we found
That all did not love.
That loving meant including only those who spoke like them.
That loving meant my accent, my inherited tongue was forked.
They said the creator's design did not include my speech.

Chorus: *How long O Lord, How long must we wait?
Waiting at the door,*

*Walking in the streets,
Huddled where we cannot be heard?*

People: We came and we found
That all did not love.
That loving meant including only those who smelt like them,
the clean ones.
My blackness was not white, or clean, or neat, or soft, or “nice”.
They said the creator’s design did not include my dirty looks.

Chorus: *How long O Lord, How long must we wait?
Waiting at the door,
Walking in the streets,
Huddled where we cannot be smelt.*

Narrator: And the people came
And they wept bitterly for in truth they were unloved.
And God’s beautiful creation split apart,
Little bits resenting little bits of the whole beautiful creation.

Pause

Narrator: And God wept.

Chorus: *How long O my people, how long
Must you rankle with your jealousies?
Will you live in your little cells?
Open your hearts and breathe in my love for you and
all my children
Live fully in my world, not yours.*

People: And we came
And we began to see a multi-coloured company.
And the colours warmed us,
And the patterns of our coming celebrated God’s delight in us
As we wove together a rich tapestry for our God.

Chorus: *How long, O my people, how long
Will you divide and rule
Create power where there is no need of it?*

*Open your hearts and breathe in my love for you
and all my children,
Live fully in my world, not yours.*

People: And we came
And we began to hear a Pentecost
Millions of voices acknowledging, confessing and loving God
Singing, dancing, chanting with organ, drum, and pipe,
Sounding, as God's great orchestrated choir.

Chorus: *How long O my people, how long
Must you interpret my kingdom in your earthly ways?
Look out of the narrow ghettos of your minds,
Breathe in the sweet smell of heaven where you are,
Next to you, around you and above you.*

People: And we came;
And as we sensed all that was around us,
Our whole beings were filled with God's passion,
And released the perfume of heaven
For all to breathe,
Drawing in and exuding the mighty rhythms of a loving creation.

All: *O my people,
How I love you!
You have unblocked your eyes
opened your eyes
sensed with your whole being, my ways.
My kingdom is here, you have brought it into your lives,
Live it!
Let it flow;
Let there be no beginning or end;
Let love be your guide a light to your paths and succour to
you as you grow.*

O My people how I love you.

Margaret Sawyer



Photo: Nana B Agyei

Living in a new country means that you are a stranger

I came to Northern Ireland from Poland more than seven years ago. Living in a new country means that you are a stranger. New culture, new rules, new people and new language gives strong feelings of being different.

This is connected with our feelings of security. When you are a stranger you don't feel secure and safe – you don't know what to expect from the people around you and the place where you are. You have to be very careful and sensitive in what you do and say. When you add to that language difficulties and the fact that some English words, with very different meanings like: live and leave or cut and cat, sound the same in foreign ears, you can then imagine how people might feel moving to a new country.

When I came here seven years ago, I discovered that people who live here are incredibly kind, I was very shocked when people stopped their cars and let me cross the street even if I wasn't on a marked road crossing, let me be first in queue at shops when I had only one or two things, said 'hello' to a stranger on the street. And I have to say that I got real support, which gave me the feeling of security and comfort, from people I met in church, who weren't just friendly but were friends to me, who cared about me and were willing to help me with any issue. They were like family to me.

Being welcoming is taking someone's hand and going with her or him through all the new things so she or he won't feel alone. This is what my church here in Northern Ireland did for me to make me feel included.

Aneta Dabek



Photo: shutterstock.com/ Teresa Levite

January 2011

I have felt excluded so often that it was difficult choosing one incident. Sometimes I wonder if my exclusion has anything to do with being a woman or that being black has more to do with it?

The times I have felt most excluded have been in the church setting and this is probably because most of my activities are church related. One thing that happens and continues to surprise me relates to the following scenario.

I had been attending a particular church for almost a year and had gotten into the habit of staying for coffee after the service, when a lovely woman came up to me and said, 'Welcome, is this your first time?' and calling her by name, I politely explained to her that I had been attending for several months now.

However, there were several other almost identical incidents to come one after the other. The one that struck me most was when one Sunday my husband and I showed up somewhat early for church as he was leading worship that day. Because it was earlyish there was someone at the door. He was well known to us, or so we believed. We had spoken to him on countless occasions but this time, in January 2011, he was rather reluctant to open the door. My husband and I were both baffled when he cracked open the huge glass door, poked his head out and asked, 'Can I help you?' at that point, calling him by name, we pointed out to him that my husband was in fact there every Sunday for the last three and a half years, but that he was a little early today as he was preparing to lead the service. He then said to us by way of an excuse, 'Well you never know who is at the door. People keep coming to the door for food you know!'

Tessa Henry-Robinson

Some Themes for Intercessory Prayers

Photo: Bashar Al-Ba'noon - www.radiantguy.com

It is recommended that these are responsive prayers with space for silent prayerful reflection between each section. Please add in situations that are recently reported.

Leader: We pray for all people everywhere in God's world.

We pray for The Church of Christ throughout the world remembering especially... places where Christians are persecuted, where issues divide its communities, where there is not yet one race, the human race. We pray for this church and its sister churches close by, for all who come here and all who are enquirers.

O God we seek to do Your will, to live and not to count the cost, to love one another as You have loved us through the self-emptying of Christ on the cross.

SILENCE

Response: **O God, hear our prayers and our cries for justice.**

Leader: We pray for all nations and their peoples remembering especially ...places where there is war and incursion, where the common good is trampled down by those who seek to assert their own power, for those with authority that they may serve Your people well.

O God, help us to agitate for wisdom and truth to guide and

direct all those who lead, that they may seek to serve the common good.

Response: ***O God hear our prayers and our cries for justice.***

Leader: We pray for those whom we know and love, our families, friends, neighbours and colleagues and the people we pass on the street that we may find Christ in each of them and seek to love them as You love us.

O God, help us not to divide our affections between those who are like us and those who are not, help us to live as Your one great family on earth, respecting and valuing all whom You have given us.

Response: ***O God hear our prayers and our cries for love and justice***

Leader: We offer our prayers for all those who are poorly, lonely, frightened and in need of comfort at this time particularly those who are terrorised because of their colour. (If there are particular instances of this in the news please hold them in prayer here.)

O God, we know that the world is still a very unfair place where the rich often do not share or seek to understand what it is to be poor and marginalised, where white is still seen by too many as supreme. We know that Your Church is no better than many other places and we are ashamed of this. Guide our thoughts in the ways of love and peace.

Response: ***O God hear our prayers and our cries for love and justice.***

Leader: O God we hold up to You all Your people that they may know of your unconditional love for them, everyone and all Your world. We stand with our Saviour, Jesus Christ, who shows us what it is to walk truly in Your paths of justice, love and peace.

Amen

Margaret Sawyer

A Racial Justice Exercise: Being in and being out



Photo: Coco Curranski

Time: 30 minutes

Materials: Coloured card or paper, chairs

Aim: To begin to explore issues and emotions of inclusion and exclusion and factors associated with them.

Exercise: Place chairs for all your participants in a circle.
Underneath each chair place a coloured piece of paper.

(The variety of different coloured paper will depend on the size of your group and how big you want the small groups to be e.g. for a group of 10 – 16 people, a variety of 3 colours will be necessary so that you have 3 small groups).

On each piece of paper write:

‘Hold this so others in the group can see the colour of your paper but not what is written; group together with those who have the same coloured paper as you and only speak with them.’

Ask participants to take the piece of paper from under their seats and follow the instructions. You need to leave two or three seats with different coloured paper underneath that no-one else has, but containing the same instructions as the other papers.

Allow 5 minutes for the participants to group together and begin their conversations (you may want to suggest a topic for the participants to talk about).

Do not speak or make comment to the people with different coloured pieces of paper. If they try and speak to you, move away until the exercise is finished (unless they try to leave the space).

Discussion:

Ask the excluded person:

- † How did it feel to be excluded from the group?
- † Did you try to become part of the group?
- † If yes, what did you do? If no, why not?

Ask the excluders:

- † How did it feel to be doing the excluding?

Continued discussion for all:

- † Can you think of a time when you felt different to others?
- † What one word would describe how you felt?
- † What could others have done to make you feel included?
- † Have you ever excluded anyone from a group?
If yes, why?

Individual task at the end of the discussion:

Ask all participants to write on their papers, a list of things they could do to help people feel included.

The 'inclusion actions' could then be displayed on a wall or prioritised for action by the group or...
or...
or...

(Please identify your own way of taking forward the inclusion actions.)

Lorraine Downer-Mattis and Tottenham URC Young Peoples Group

What can you do? Suggestions for Action



Here are some suggestions that will help you to broaden your outreach and help you and your community to grow and that will create positive responses in a diverse setting. You may be doing some of them already; other ideas will be new to you.

It is often easier to do new things with a group of friends or as a family. This way of working together will allow those who participate to raise concerns or express new joys in a safe environment without undue exposure and all will then learn and grow together. However it will be important that the group does not remain inward looking and so we suggest that as you plan things to do together that this should include welcoming new friends to be part of the planning stage.

The initial stage



- † A smile and a “hello” go a long way to breaking down an initial awkward moment.
- † Introduce yourself and invite the new person to give their name too. Learn the new name.
- † Talk naturally without raising your volume.
- † Speak and avoid asking questions. Have some topics for conversation up your sleeve (The planning group can help with these).
- † Speak about the church community, who the priest/minister(s) are/is and who the senior lay people are and offer to make the introductions.

Photo (left): Eddy Van 3000



Photo: Helen White

- † If your church has a calendar of events or a preaching plan offer to get a copy for them and invite them to go to some of the events with you.
- † Remember the first conversation you had and hold it in your prayers.
- † Make sure you deliberately look out for them in the following weeks.
- † Invite new people to your home for a meal and invite others to join you too.
- † Have a competition for the most words which mean welcome.
- † Suggest a study group to explore the meaning and value of welcome so that there is action to follow up the greeting.
- † Suggest activities that transcend language barriers such as sport or computer games.
- † Talk with your new friends to find out what activities would support them, e.g. a homework club, a night out together.
- † Remember to hold all of your actions within the context of Gospel values.

Towards Greater Inclusion

Ensure a different ethnic group within your church are involved in a weekly rota for:

- † The welcome stewards
- † Taking the offertory
- † Serving refreshments after the service
- † Providing the flowers or the setting up of the worship area
- † Suggest setting up a monthly shared meal ensuring that different ethnicities have a place on the rota to cook.

- † For the long term, aim to create groups for all these activities that are diverse within themselves rather than continuing with single ethnic groups.

Being an Inclusive Church



Photo: Paulo Ordoveza

Achieving such status as a truly inclusive Church will take time and intentional dedication. It cannot be achieved quickly or simply. Therefore it is important to provide opportunities for the church body to talk and share their feelings about how progress is being made. Being an Inclusive Church is about maintaining a transparent agenda for all to see and contribute to. So the ultimate goal must be for there to be true inclusion at all levels of the church community, to ensure that everyone's voice is heard.

Therefore:

- † Consider the time of church meetings to ensure that all have equal access for them.
- † Empower the various ethnicities to express themselves in ways that feel good for them.
- † When elections/selections come for new lay roles ensure that the whole community feel they can join in the selection process and that it is open and transparent.
- † Make sure that all offers and ideas are picked up and followed through and not just the ones that appeal to you.
- † Work towards ensuring that all the voices of the church community are heard and that news of developing work is cascaded out to the entire community.

Margaret Sawyer

How to use this pack

This pack has been published in order to provide materials for churches on Racial Justice Sunday. However, the materials can be used at any time during the year, for example:

- † in worship services
- † in house groups
- † to support training programmes in the Church
- † to support personal learning growth and development
- † at synods, annual conferences or other occasions of national significance within your denomination.

The materials are for you to adapt and use appropriately to your local situation. We hope you are inspired by them so that you can add to them and not be constrained by them.

You may also wish to consider other activities that are happening during the autumn with which there are links, such as Black History Month, One World Week, Interfaith Week, as well as Church action on Homelessness and Poverty (Jan/Feb). See www.ctbi.org.uk/racialjusticesunday for further information.

The cover for this pamphlet can be downloaded separately so that you can include inside it those resources you would like to use for your service.

The prayer of CTBI Racial Justice Network is that we will consistently increase our ability to equip the churches to better address Racial Justice Issues in all that is done locally and nationally so that the evil of racial discrimination and exclusion is overcome. We therefore greatly value your feedback. Please complete the feedback sheet that can be found on the website.

As well as looking forward to your feedback, we would also like to be able to share your particular Racial Justice Sunday story with all those who use these resources so that others can be inspired by your interpretation of what is on offer. Please feel free to use whatever media you like to capture it and send your emails, video clips, tweets, blogs or anything else to rjs@ctbi.org.uk before December 2012.

Thank you.

The Writers Group

Acknowledgments and Contributors

CTBI wishes to thank all those who have made the publication of the Racial Justice Sunday materials possible.

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CTBI acknowledges with appreciation the commitment and self-giving of those who have helped the Writers Group by writing for these resources and thanks especially those who have been willing to share their personal stories.

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ISBN: 978-0-85169-375-0

Further copies available from:

Norwich Books and Music

13a Hellesdon Park Road, Norwich, Norfolk NR6 5DR

Order line: 01603 785925, Fax: 01603 785915

Online www.chbookshop.co.uk

Enquiries to orders@norwichbooksandmusic.co.uk



Also available to download at www.ctbi.org.uk/racialjusticesunday

Published by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland

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London SW1V 1BX

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Registered charity no. 1113299

Company limited by guarantee,

registered no. 5661787

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Photo: Bashar Al-Ba'noon - www.radiantguy.com