

Transfiguration Sunday – Year B

Racial Justice Sunday

Sunday 11 February 2024

The Faith Action Programme would like to thank Churches Together in Britain and Ireland for their resources for Racial Justice Sunday, Transfiguration Sunday.

Racial Justice Sunday is an occasion for Christians in Britain to collectively focus on racial justice. It began in 1995, and generally took place on the second Sunday in September. In 2017, a decision was taken to move the date to the second Sunday in February (a direct swap with Education Sunday, which was then in February).

These resources are produced by CTBI's sponsoring churches. The materials will enable you to Remember, Reflect and Respond to racial justice matters.

- Remember the importance of racial justice
- Reflect on human diversity and thank God for it
- Respond by working to end injustice, racism and ignorance through prayer and action

Visit the CTBI website to download the order of worship, sermons, reflections, artwork and other resources: <https://ctbi.org.uk/racial-justice-sunday-2024/>

We would encourage continual reflection on the changing patterns of worship and spiritual practice that are emerging from disruption and how this might help identify pathways towards development and worship renewal.

An archive of resources for daily worship can be found on the Sanctuary First website: <https://www.sanctuaryfirst.org.uk/daily-worship>

We may not all be gathered in the same building, but at this time, when we need each other so much, we are invited to worship together, from where we are – knowing that God can hear us all and can blend even distant voices into one song of worship.

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Introduction

From the Foreword and Introduction by The Rt Revd Dr John Perumbalath, Bishop of Liverpool and Chair of the CTBI Churches' Refugee Network; and Richard Reddie, CTBI Director of Justice and Inclusion and Coordinator of Churches' Refugee Network.

Racial prejudice plays a dominant role in the hostile approach to refugees. Racism is at the root of the 'hostile environment' that is promoted as an official policy in our country. Therefore, on Racial Justice Sunday this year, it is appropriate that we focus on the justice dimension of our hospitality to those who are fleeing persecution.

The affirmation that every human being carries the image of God regardless of their race, colour or geographical location is foundational to our Christian understanding of humanity. It is a tragic effect of our sin that a huge number among us live in poverty and conflict – which compels them to look for places of safety and security elsewhere – while many of us live in comfort and relative peace. Offering hospitality to the most vulnerable among us is part of reparation as we repent of our corporate sin.

This year's Racial Justice Sunday resources explore the movement of people from their homelands to the places they now call home, and examine the motivations behind this movement – the journeys made, and the reception or welcome received on arrival. It also aims to shine a biblical light on what is currently taking place, and the way Christians are (and can) make a difference within these spheres. This is a racial justice issue because, apart from the Ukraine, most of those seeking sanctuary have Black and Brown faces. What is more, it is an interfaith/religious justice matter because a good number are not Christians.

The Bible is replete with verses that call upon God's people to offer sanctuary to the foreigner, the alien and the vulnerable. Many of these references are implicit or 'hidden in plain sight', but there are others such as the 37 commands in the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible to 'love the stranger'; the entire Book of Ruth; or the Holy Family's escape to Africa (Egypt) in the Gospel of Matthew, which are explicit references to refuge and sanctuary. If the Scriptures have this to say about sanctuary and hospitality, the questions we need to ask are:

- Who are 'God's people on the move' and what is our responsibility, as Christians, towards them?
- Is there a sliding scale of importance regarding the regions from which those seeking sanctuary or asylum come?

- Do we prioritise Christians fleeing religious persecution over those of other beliefs or none?
- How have policies and economic practices emanating from Europe detrimentally affected parts of the developing world, resulting in conflict and poverty?
- Do we view those fleeing poverty differently from those escaping persecution?

As such, this resource aims to inform, challenge and inspire everyone to pray and take action, so that hospitality and not hostility becomes our overall approach to those fleeing persecution, peril, poverty and war.

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Prayer

God of all,
You have named each and every one of us as Your child.
Remind us that we are God breathed, beloved
and imbued with beauty and dignity.
As we gather in Your presence on this Racial Justice Sunday
in different communities around the country,
unify us in Your love
and join our different and distant voices
into one song of worship to You.
Amen.

Musical suggestions

Our [online music resource](#) is on the Church of Scotland website; you can listen to samples of every song in the Church Hymnary 4th edition (CH4) and download a selection of recordings for use in worship. You will also find playlists for this week and liturgical seasons and themes on the *Weekly Worship* and *Inspire Me* tabs.

You can find further musical suggestions for this week in a range of styles on the [Songs for Sunday blog](#) from Trinity College Glasgow.

Reflecting on our worship practice

Since the start of the pandemic in 2020, the way we worship has changed and we need to reflect on the changing or newly established patterns that emerged and continue to emerge as a result of the disruption.

We can facilitate worship for all by exploring imaginative approaches to inclusion, participation and our use of technologies in ways that suit our contexts. This is not an exhaustive list, but some things we could consider are:

- Framing various parts of the worship service in accessible language to help worshippers understand the character and purpose of each part. This is essential for creating worship for all (intergenerational worship) that reflects your community of faith.
- Holding spaces for reflection and encouraging prayer to be articulated in verbal and non-verbal ways, individually and in online breakout rooms.
- In online formats the effective use of the chat function and microphone settings encourages active participation in prayer, e.g. saying the Lord's Prayer together unmuted, in a moment of 'holy chaos'.
- If singing in our congregations is restricted, we can worship corporately by using antiphonal psalm readings, creeds and participative prayers.
- Using music and the arts as part of the worship encourages the use of imagination in place of sung or spoken words.
- Use of silence, sensory and kinaesthetic practices allow for experience and expression beyond regular audio and visual mediums.

The following questions might help you develop a habit of reflecting on how we create and deliver content and its effectiveness and impact, and then applying what we learn to develop our practice.

- How inclusive was the worship?
Could the worship delivery and content be described as worship for all/
intergenerational? Was it sensitive to different "Spiritual Styles"?
- How was the balance between passive and active participation?
- How were people empowered to connect with or encounter God?
What helped this? What hindered this?
- How cohesive was the worship?

Did it function well as a whole?

How effective was each of the individual elements in fulfilling its purpose?

- How balanced was the worship?
What themes/topics/doctrines/areas of Christian life were included?
- How did the worship connect with your context/contemporary issues?
Was it relevant in the everyday lives of those attending and in the wider parish/
community?
How well did the worship connect with local and national issues?
How well did the worship connect with world events/issues?
- What have I learned that can help me next time I plan and deliver worship?

Useful links

Up to date information for churches around Covid-19 can be found [here](#)

You can listen to samples of every song in the Church Hymnary 4th edition (CH4) and
download a selection of recordings for use in worship [here](#)

You can find an introduction to spiritual styles online [here](#)