

Resourcing Racial Justice Sunday 2018

'staying power'

Transfiguration Sunday (February 11, 2018)



[Resources for Racial Justice Sunday 2018 have been prepared by Racial Justice and Intercultural Advocates of the United Reformed Church and the Global and Intercultural Ministries Team. We are especially thankful to all who have contributed to this resource. All images are photos taken by Michael Jagessar from across the UK and Europe.]

2 Kings 2:1-12

‘Stay here...’

Here is more than a story. Think transition. Do you think Elisha may be aware of the challenges of the tasks ahead, hence his request for a ‘double share’ of Elijah’s spirit. Having to pick up Elijah’s mantle and prophetic role may have been daunting. Some say we live in a post-racial world. Those who feel and experience the prejudices and racist acts against them would tell a different story. Our ‘post-everything’ world is everything but the disappearance of prejudices and racist bigotry. Racists are crawling out of the woodwork everywhere as “Whiteness’ feel threatened. We need more Elijahs and Elishas to take on this pervasive sin of racism! “I will not leave you” are assuring words for justice advocates and all who continue to dream of and work for a just world. The assurance that we are not alone for the long haul is energizing. We need a communal and collective approach to take on the injustices around us. Prophetic ministry cannot be a ‘lone voice crying in the wilderness’ if change is to happen. For those of us who are looking to pass on the spirit of resistance against all that deny full life, both Elisha's anxieties and Elijah's sturdiness offer a model of mentoring and transitions from one generation to another. The substantive point though is that the voice of justice is not dependent on any individual. God will raise up voices even where there are no apparent ones. There is always hope.

- What are we doing to mentor prophetic voices and give concrete shape to a prophetic ministry? Who will wear the ‘mantle’? What needs chanting down and transforming?

Psalms 50:1-6

‘I will deliver you...’

All of life is a gift to be thankful for. This is quite a subversive take in a world where everything is being commodified and we are duped into believing that we can purchase and own whatever we wish. Imagine that we have nothing of our own to give to God – except our gratitude. What would this make of our gifts, offerings, motivations, relationships and actions? Thankfulness and gratitude give whole new meaning and content to our actions. It brings worship and justice into an inseparable relationship. What irritates the Divine is lip-service that contradicts living justly. This is a distortion and misrepresentation of God with false images - God who loves justice, sides with the excluded and delivers from injustices.

- Consider our worship/liturgical rites and our social engagement in and around our communities? How do they reinforce and feed each other? Where are the distortions and contradictions? What needs changing? What do we need ‘delivering from’?

2 Corinthians 4:3-6

it is not about me or us

The number one 'graven image' of our times is our obsession with 'me'. Social media such as facebook is one example of this obsession. The cosmetics industry with its promise of heavenly and ageless looks continue to shackle us while we fill their coffers. The worship of 'me' is one of the 'block' or if you prefer a cosmetic term (the light screen) to the transforming light of Christ changing lives and habits. Exclusion and marginalisation of flesh and blood veils the light of love and justice. This is a distortion of a God who gives agency to goodness and light. To confess Christ as 'light of the world' is to witness to this light to reflect this image. There is hope, though, as no veil or camouflage can block out this powerful light. Love and justice will triumph in the end.

- Reflect on the ways we might be complicit in covering-up God's light in our world. how will our lives reflect more of Christ's image? What must increase? What must diminish?

Mark 9:2-9

'...listen to him'

Imagine the difference listening to Jesus would make to hatred! This year many will mark 50 years since the assassination of Martin Luther King. Just before he was killed, he had his own mountain top experience. Like Moses he had a vision of the layout of the beloved community of which God dreams. Through the clouds and fog he saw the difficult days ahead. Beyond that he also saw the outlines of hope, even though he realised that he may not live to experience the practical content of that landscape. Many of us are still waiting for this beloved community. Evil find means and avatars to 'trump-up' its bent and evil ways. The transfigured one offers a way out: our transfiguration comes as we seek full and abundant life for all. Here is a story about God who is beyond our control, who challenges us to change the way we think and feel and act. We need to learn that compassion cannot be programmed. It is a matter of vision and heart propelled by a love that is of God and that has us moving beyond self-interest. Compassion awakens the human heart to action: not withdrawal. We are invited to step out and partner with God in Christ to change the ugliness of our world - its hatred, its hostilities, its jealousies, its hunger, its poverty, its injustice, its oppression, its alienation, its loneliness, its rivalry, its competitiveness, its grasping, its sickness - into God's economy of justice and love.

- Consider this:
 - how can we best live and embody the story of transfigured lives and communities?? Who or what we should listening to: our own voices? the voices of those silenced over the years? The strangers at our gates? Those desperate for release from the things that seize them, maul them and dash them to the ground?

Prayers/Responses/Poetry [Richard Becher and Michael Jagessar]

A dream to be lived...

I have a dream that with our faith we will carve out stones of hope from the mountains of despair

We have a dream of a kingdom to come

I have a dream that with our faith we will transform the discords of nations into a beautiful symphony of friendship

We have a dream of God's will be done

I have a dream that with our faith we will together achieve the day of freedom.

We have a dream of heaven coming to earth

I have a dream of people singing a new song of hope and love, dancing together the way of full life

We have a dream of abundant life for all

I have a dream of heaven on earth, enough bread for everyone, reconciliation and God's forever 'amen' chorus.

We have a dream of living in God's love and embrace

It is a dream we can share when we live the prayer that we say: *Our Father.....*

[Richard Becher]

Prayer before the readings

Generous God,

open our eyes, ears and hearts
to see your love transfigured
in the world you love so much.

May your word speak to us

showing us the way,
telling a story, your story,
Jesus' story, our story.

Teach us

trust in the midst of fears,
hope to overcome our despairing.

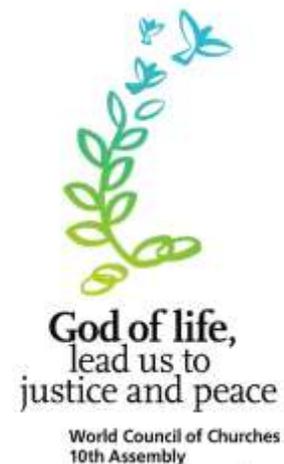
Lead us up,

lead us down and
lead us out...

Lead us to listen to the voice of your beloved, LOVE incarnate.

In his name, we pray.....

[Michael Jagessar]



Invitation to look in a mirror

Whoever welcomes you welcomes Jesus, so welcome the person you see in the mirror you hold...

(Hold your hands in front of you as if they are a mirror...)

Come, look in the mirror and see truth

Let good news be seen through me

Come, look in the mirror and see light

May Christ's be revealed in me

Come, look in a mirror and see a new you

God's image reflected in me

Come, look in the mirror and be encouraged

Rays of hope flowing from my heart

Come, open your eyes and look in a mirror

The face of Christ is in me for all to see



So, come as you are, shapeless and empty. Listen for God whatever the state of your life. Feel the power of the Spirit moving in you. Let the light of life find a place in your heart.

(open arms wide in a gesture of welcome to everyone)

Lord, we offer ourselves reflect your light for the world

[Richard Becher]

Clean clothes for life...

"His clothes danced in the darkness they were so clean; cleaner than anyone in the world could ever bleach them." Mark 9: 3

Giver of abundant life, take me up the mountain and clean my clothes so I can come down again all dressed like you. If it is too worn to repair then give me new clothes just like yours! I like your style, the fashion and the quality - so let me wear what you wear and be as one with you. Your style crosses genders, cultures and much more, affirming difference and our uniqueness. Give me courage to wear your clothing of right relations and healing.

Empower me, holy one to sow, thread and tread your way of love with. Send us out to be a wearer of your way and values so the world can be dazzled by your presence.

May the garments of dead traditions be cast off as we find new life for the valleys.

May threads of compassion, kindness, humility and patience shape garments of your light and love for all to see, know and experience.

Release our minds and tongues to dare to tell your story of a present and future full of goodness, healing – to fear no evil for you are with us always. [Richard Becher]

Hymn for Racial Justice Sunday (February 2018)

We kindly suggest that you consider purchasing a copy of John Campbell's, *Songs to Shake us Up* (Kevin Mayhew 2016). In this volume you will find a collection of hymns to use. John Campbell has written the new hymns below specifically for this Sunday.

Racial Justice transfiguration

tune: Faithfulness (Runyan), Rejoice and Sing 96 based on Mark 9.2-9

Moses in Egypt, for you, faced injustice;
challenging Pharaoh to set the slaves free;
round after round of resistant refusal
ended in freedom that just had to be.

**God, keep your hope unfurled,
here in our unjust world,
lead in the struggle for justice for all;
till each and all are both valued and welcomed,
help us stay true to your cause and your call.**

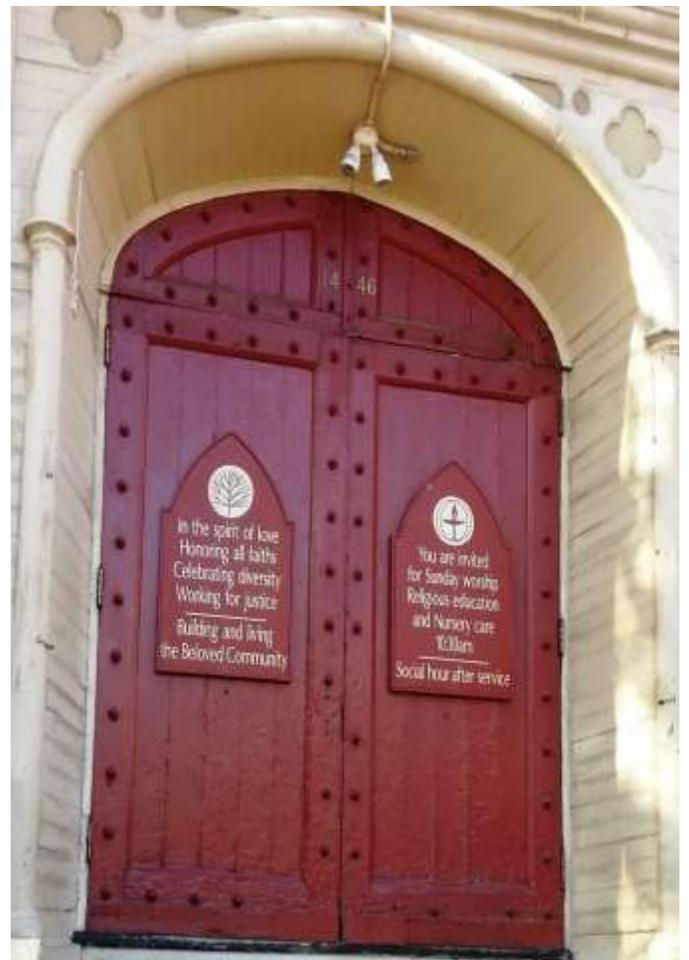
Prophet Elijah, for you, faced injustice,
battling the pow'rs of insatiable greed;
Ahab and Jezebel sought to destroy him,
yet he stayed true 'til the people were freed.

Jesus our Saviour, for us, faced injustice,
feeling the pain of those others don't see;
lepers and outcasts grew strong in his welcome;
he gave his life so we all could be free.

James, John and Peter, for you, faced injustice,
down from the mountain, found much to be done.
Learning in life that your love has no limits,
changed them 'til they could embrace ev'ryone.

We, in your church today, still face injustice,
will we ignore, or collude, or despair,
or joining Moses, Elijah and Jesus,
struggle to make our world wholesome and fair?

John Campbell, 5/1/18



Conversation-Activity Points

Consider and Reflect on the following:

- How are the principles of neoliberalism reinforced through the racial dimensions of governance, the criminal justice system and the media?
- Have a go at 'curating news items' from your local media related to racism, Xenophobia, Islamophobia and 'migrant bashing'. Also, highlight where individuals and groups are working to make a difference. Consider sharing in your congregation and across your synod/ecumenical partnerships.
- Encourage a film and discussion evening on a film such as: "I am not your Negro" (2017), "Mudbound" (2017) or "Paddington 2" (2017)

Some further online Resources [from GiM Team]

- *Sacred Conversations on Migration: @ home in a strange place:*
<http://www.urc.org.uk/at-home-mission.html>
- *Imagine a world*, poem by Karen Campbell:
http://www.urc.org.uk/images/mission/at_home_strange/Imagine_a_world_by_Karen_Campbell.pdf
- *Prayers and resources by Carla Grosch Miller:*
http://www.urc.org.uk/images/mission/at_home_strange/Worship_Resources_-_Carla_GM.pdf
- *Refugee Crisis in Europe resource reflections:*
<http://catholicnews.org.uk/Home/Featured/Features-2016/Racial-Justice-Sunday-2016/Background>
- 'Beyond I have a dream':
<https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2018/01/harvard-scholars-discuss-kings-legacy-as-a-political-philosopher/>
- GiM Racial Justice Links on URC webpage:
<http://www.urc.org.uk/intercultural-resources.html>
- Journal *Race and Class* (access to some issues online):
<http://journals.sagepub.com/loi/racb?expanded=2016&expanded=2017>



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