

Racial Justice Sunday is for all churches to reflect on the importance of racial justice, to give thanks for the gifts and beauty of human diversity, and to commit to end racism and acts of discrimination.

“The central claim of Christianity is that Jesus offers full restoration of the image of God in humanity through his life, death and resurrection. To follow Christ, as the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:27) implies a commitment to this quest for wholeness in humanity at personal and collective levels”.¹ Our worship of God draws together the personal and the collective. It is the place where, led by the Spirit, we are moved from lament to action, from repentance to healing and embrace, and where we gather around one table with all God’s children.

These resources are designed for use on Racial Justice Sunday. Racial Justice Sunday is an ecumenical observance which began in 1995 in Britain and Ireland. The catalyst for this observation was the murder of Stephen Lawrence, a Black teenager in South London, on 22 April 1993. In 2017, Racial Justice Sunday moved from September to the second Sunday of February.

Racial Justice Sunday is for all churches to reflect on the importance of racial justice, to give thanks for the gifts and beauty of human diversity, and to commit to end racism and acts of discrimination. It is, however, more than an annual reminder of the Church’s commitment to the task of anti-racism. In the words of Richard Reddie from [Churches Together in Britain and Ireland](#), this Sunday represents “a call for Christians to engage in the righteous struggle for racial justice because racial justice is everyone’s business”.²

The gospel calls all Christians continually to confront the idolatry of racism and the evils in our world and to proclaim justice and mercy as we seek to walk with our God (Micah 6:8). Our worship unites us to Christ, transforms us in Word and Sacrament, and sends us out into the world to uphold the dignity of all in Christ. Racism and racial discrimination are issues of justice because they deny basic human dignity to men and women made in God’s image. Wherever and whenever we treat another “as lesser, or other, our theology fails to celebrate the dramatic nature of our transformation as people who find their primary identity in Christ. In Christ, our differences are not simply erased but rather embraced, valuing the unique ways we each reflect the image of God”.³

The use of these resources and the worship and action they inspire may cause people be aware of their own vulnerability. There is a risk too that well-meaning worship leaders may unintentionally ‘other’ those whom they intend to serve. The use of these resources, and responses to the questions they may raise, should rely on [the Pastoral Principles for Living Well Together](#). These principles were created as part of the Church of England’s [Living in Love and Faith project](#). Designed for church communities to use to examine their life together, these principles “apply to all sorts of difference and diversity among God’s people.”⁴ The six pastoral principles call communities to:

- acknowledge prejudice
- speak into silence
- address ignorance
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name fear

- admit vulnerability
- pay attention to power
- commit to action.

Such principles help us learn and live together in difference and diversity. They confront the six ‘pervading evils’ — prejudice, silence, ignorance, fear, hypocrisy, and power — which hinder our growth as Christians and stop our churches and communities from being places where all are truly welcome. Assuming that racism ‘isn’t our problem’ derives directly from these evils and the Pastoral Principles are essential to help each and every Christian community and individual recognise them, confront them, lament, pray, and seek transformation of heart and of communities divided.

Liturgical resources cannot resolve and eradicate the sin of racism. But liturgy has the power to form and shape our values and attitudes and how we live our faith in every moment. As Archbishop Desmond Tutu reflected, “As much as the world has an instinct for evil and is a breeding ground for genocide, holocaust, slavery, racism, war, oppression, and injustice, the world has an even greater instinct for goodness, rebirth, mercy, beauty, truth, freedom and love.” As we move in our worship from lament to action, from repentance to healing, may we be agents of God’s goodness, rebirth, mercy, beauty, truth, freedom and love in our broken and hurting world.

- 1<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-04/FromLamentToAction-report.pdf>
- 2<https://ctbi.org.uk/racial-justice-sunday-13-february-2022/>
- 3<https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-04/FromLamentToAction-report.pdf>
- 4https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2021-04/COFE_03022_PastoralPrinciples_A5Booklet_fullweb.pdf and <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/general-synod/bishops/pastoral-advisory-group/pastoral-principles>

A collect for Racial Justice Sunday

Merciful God,

you are righteous and love justice:

stir the hearts of your people that,

rejoicing in our diversity,

we may repent of the wrongs of the past,

and, by your grace, seek the peaceable kingdom of your Son,

our Saviour Jesus Christ,

who lives and reigns with you,

in the unity of the Holy Spirit,

one God, now and for ever.

All Amen.

Download the resources

- [Exodus! Justice for God's People on the Move](#) (Worship resources prepared by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland)
- [Liturgical Resources for Racial Justice Sunday](#) (The Church of England)

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