

Fifth Sunday after Epiphany – Year C

Sunday 9 February 2025

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

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-9-february-2025/>

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.

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.

Introduction.....	3
Prayers	4
Musical suggestions	5
Reflecting on our worship practice	6
Useful links	7

Introduction

From the Introduction by Richard Reddie, CTBI Director of Justice and Inclusion, and Coordinator of the Churches' Refugee Network

This year is an important one for racial justice on these shores as it marks the 30th anniversary of RJS. RJS was established by the Methodist Church in 1995 following the tragic racist murder of Black teenager Stephen Lawrence in southeast London in April 1993. The Lawrence family attended a local Methodist Church in that part of the capital, and the Methodist Church agreed to support the family's justice campaign to find young Stephen's killers. A few years later, the Churches' Commission for Racial Justice (CCRJ), a Churches Together in Britain and Ireland programme, agreed to mainstream the special Sunday so that all the churches could engage with it. We will discover more about this history from the Revd David Haslam, a former Methodist minister and head of the CCRJ during these times, who reflects on the anniversary and what it means for racial justice on these shores today.

This year's theme has the title 'Coat of Many Colours', reflecting the increasing diversity that exists in the churches in Britain and Ireland. Both the Old Testament, or the Hebrew Bible, and the New Testament are replete with references to diversity, in this world and the Kingdom to come. One only has to reflect on verses that speak of a 'house of prayer for all nations' (Isaiah 56:7), the events of Pentecost (Acts 2) or the 'multitude ... from every nation' (Revelation 7:9-17), which all include words meaning 'every tribe and nation', to see that ethnic diversity is part of God's divine plan. There is little doubt that British churches, especially in the larger cities, are a microcosm of the world in a congregation, which is indeed a blessing that must be celebrated. Equally, the fact that the diversity of believers has breathed some much-needed spiritual life into our churches reveals that this is a movement of God for which He must be praised. In our reflections and sermons, members of the RJSWG and others, who hail from many parts of the globe, describe their experiences of being part of the Coat of Many Colours.

Yet, despite this amazing reality, inequality still exists in the church and is still a factor that blights the experiences of too many people of Global Majority heritage or Black and Brown backgrounds. This leaves people not feeling as if they belong in the house of the Lord, or not being given the opportunity to use their God-given talents to further the Lord's Kingdom. Given the unwelcome decline in church attendance over the last several decades, British and Irish churches must wake up to the reality that God is doing a 'new thing' (Isaiah 43:19) among those Christians who now call these shores home. Again, our sermons and reflections in this resource address the importance of inclusion and the need for all Christians to engage in the righteous work for racial justice.

Once again, we are offering here excellent materials that enable all churches to worship, pray and reflect on what it means to be a truly equitable, justice-driven, loving Body of Christ. Phill Mellstrom, our writer, has provided a veritable tableau which churches and Christians can use in its entirety, or from which they can select particular items, as befits their worship style.

Moreover, our hymns, worship songs and Bible readings complement the liturgical materials, ensuring Christians and churches can fully engage in the subject. Equally, we have provided a thorough list of reading materials from Christians largely based in Britain and Ireland that will enable readers to further engage with their racial justice journeys.

Finally, although the second Sunday in February is Racial Justice Sunday, the truth is, every Sunday should be Racial Justice Sunday. Our God is a God of justice who takes an interest in justice permanently and perennially. If that's the way God sees it, so should we!

Visit the CTBI website to download the order of worship, sermons, reflections, artwork and other resources: <https://ctbi.org.uk/racial-justice-sunday-9-february-2025/>

Prayers

A gathering prayer based on the Coat of Many Colours' imagery from our theme this year.

God of all people,
You are the one who brought us into being,
knitting and weaving us together and forming us before we were even born.
You know us, each and every one –
Your dear children, blessed to be bearers of Your image and likeness.

God of all nations,
You stitch and sew this intricate image of You –
like a garment of many colours, stitched, sewn and hemmed;
each tone and hue painted with the tender care of You, the Artist,
Our Maker and Creator – clothing us all in Your love and mercy.

May Your dream for all Your dear children come true;

may Your hope for all the earth to be renewed and reconciled be made real;
may Your Kingdom come on this earth in this time, and be established for ever.

We call on You, O God,
that on this Racial Justice Sunday
You would bring together our hopes and fears,
our prayers and our praise,
and unite them, as we draw closer in communion with You and each other,
for Your glory.

Amen

Musical suggestions

God Welcomes All (GWA) is the new supplement to Church Hymnary Fourth Edition. This exciting new collection features over 200 hymns and songs in a wide range of styles by writers from Scotland and around the world.

The full music version is now available; and the words-only book, digital resources including the expansion of the existing Church of Scotland music website, will be published in due course, with streaming functions and further information on each song; backing tracks; and lyric videos. *God Welcomes All* is available to order from

<https://chbookshop.hymnsam.co.uk/books/9781786225573/god-welcomes-all>

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.

- GWA 207 – “We’re the light of all the world” – (We are a rainbow)
- GWA 226 – “God of all comfort, God of compassion” – a call to the Church to be agents of God’s redemption

- CH4 166 – “Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy”
- CH4 198 – “Let us build a house where love can dwell
- CH4 235 – “God is working his purpose out”
- CH4 259 – “Beauty for brokenness”

- CH4 263 – “God of Freedom, God of Justice”
- CH4 543 – “Longing for light, we wait in darkness” (Christ be our light)
- CH4 694 – “Brother, sister, let me serve you”

- A suggested playlist of songs from CH4 throughout Epiphany can be found on the Church of Scotland website [here](#)

Reflecting on our worship practice

Since the start of the Covid-19 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

God Welcomes All can be ordered from [Hymns Ancient & Modern](#)

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](#)