

PRAYERS FOR LEADERS' USE
South Bedfordshire Circuit of
the Methodist Church in Britain

1. At the South Bedfordshire Circuit, we embarked (Feb. 2019) on an exploratory research project to identify Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) issues. The results have now led the Circuit to take steps to develop and/or improve EDI policies and practices, and practice integrated ways in which to serve God and the community.

2. This analysis predates recent global developments, but the Circuit's awareness of the ramifications of the killing of African American man, George Floyd, has tended to deepen the search for lasting outcomes locally and globally. The heinous act in Minneapolis perhaps has served to sharpen the Church's resolve to inspire more God-centred relationships in which all peoples can grow and flourish.

3. In this regard, the Circuit agreed to concentrate initially on ethnic inequalities. Age, disability, sex, or sexual orientation are also to receive appropriate attention in due course. Nevertheless, the developing programme is undergirded by prayer. The Circuit continues to seek God's grace and guidance in this work to build a community in which Jesus' eschatological sayings capture its outlook: 'inasmuch as you do this to the least of one of these my brethren, you have done it to me' (Matthew 25:31-46).

4. We invite you to join us in this task, first by continuing to pray for:

- our unity and 'oneness' as fellows in Christ (Ephesians 2:11-22);
- justice, as the outworking of righteousness (Amos 5:24);
- upcoming activities in which members and friends will contribute to the Circuit's work developing policies and practices – of course, when personal safety (coronavirus pandemic) is generally favourable.

5. These prayers will be prepared and led by ministers, preachers, worship leaders, lay workers, teachers, and others you may wish to include; prayers will be regularly updated. Please note also:

- in reference to God, users may feel free to use 'Father' or 'Mother', and are encouraged to be sensitive to needs of others;
- prayers reflect local and international concerns on justice and oppression;
- prayers may be used as written, or users may adapt language;
- use these prayers in regular intercessions, online, or other appropriate gatherings;
- prayers may be used interchangeably, in part, or you may compose your own as the Circuit engages this task together.

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The Revd A W Trotman
on behalf of SBC Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Group
July 8, 2020

PRAYERS

General guidance

Included here are prayers for the local Church concerns, international situations, youth issues, prayers for victims and survivors, perpetrators of modern and historical enslavement, and racial violence, together with their families; other inequalities are covered. Prayers can be used as written or copied and pasted to formats in Methodist WB or supplemented.

Prayer of Serenity by Reinhold Niebuhr

God, give us grace to accept with serenity
the things that cannot be changed,
Courage to change the things
which should be changed,
and the Wisdom to distinguish
the one from the other.

Living one day at a time,
Enjoying one moment at a time,
Accepting hardship as a pathway to peace,
Taking, as Jesus did,
This sinful world as it is,

Not as I would have it,
Trusting that You will make all things right,
If I surrender to Your will,
So that I may be reasonably happy in this life,
And supremely happy with You forever in the next.

**Prayer of Intercession
Where there is injustice**

LEADER: Heavenly Father, the world can be a difficult place:
many people are ostracised and rejected by family, and church,
for their sexual orientation or gender identification.
Remind us that we have a duty to welcome all, and not to judge.
Lord, help us to see your creation in the person.

ALL: Help us to break down barriers and strive for a unified world.

LEADER: Heavenly Father, the world can be a difficult place:
many are treated unfairly because of their skin colour.
because of lack of interest, sometimes because of racism.
Lord, open our eyes and ears to see and hear, and act justly.

ALL: Help us to break down barriers and strive for a unified world.

LEADER: Heavenly Father, the world can be a difficult place:
those chosen to keep law and order do not must always act with responsibility.
Help them to look beyond prejudice, be responsible and act justly with compassion.

ALL: Help us to break down barriers and strive for a unified world.

LEADER: Heavenly Father, Lord, the world can be a difficult place:
let those in the Justice System respect those who come into contact with them,
recognise their bias, open their hearts and minds, and act justly with compassion.

ALL: Help us to break down barriers and strive for a unified world.

LEADER: Lord, the world can be a difficult place:
may those responsible for healthcare recognise systemic inequalities in access and
treatment.
Enable those with power and influence to reflect; help them to act with impartiality
and justice.

**ALL: Help us to make the world a better place; show us how we recognise our
failures and responsibilities and take just and peaceful action.**

LEADER: In the name of the ONE who sets us free, Jesus Christ, our Lord, **Amen.**

**Prayers of intercession
Suffering together**

LEADER: Heavenly Father, Mother of us all, you have told us that whatever good we do to those who suffer in this world, we do to you.

Enable us to love one another as we love you; to share people's suffering through service, and in the act of repentance, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

When any of the least of your children declare 'I cannot breathe', suffering injustice, degrading and inhuman treatment, our breath is also taken away.

All: Lord, renew in us your breath of love, life, and liberty, that we may choose to love, to serve and be reconcile through your Lordship, and our common life; that, with full regard to one another, with repentance, forgiveness and reconciliation, we love, live and share liberty; in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**Intercessory prayers
Local and international injustices**

LEADER: Lord, we bring before you the leaders and peoples of the nations in which life, well-being, liberty, and peace are constrained or denied; because of hatred on ethnic and cultural grounds; because of nationalist, religious and international conflict, often executed by those entrusted with the care and protection of a people.

ALL: We pray for justice, peaceful and humane treatment of black, Asian, minority ethnic people, and people of colour, when they come into contact with police and security services, particularly in the United States of America, Britain, Europe and wherever it occurs;

An INDIVIDUAL: we pray for new understanding, mutual respect, and the shared future across the diverse communities of the United Kingdom; for the defeat of white on black racism in church and society;

ALL: we pray for the people of Yemen, dying without food, victims of violence and sickness, and, vulnerable to further atrocities following prolonged bombing;

LEADER: we pray for the Uighurs people, confined to Chinese mass imprisonment camps, and the increasing oppression of Tibetan and Hong Kong nationals;

for victims of the Syrian civil war, where people are maimed, starved, killed by their own government and other participating forces, and livelihoods destroyed;

for resolution to Israel-Palestinian conflict, where Palestinian people continue to suffer as Israeli governments build illegal settlements in Palestinian occupied territories, thereby extending inhuman and degrading treatment towards them;

INDIVIDUAL: for African Americans and other people of colour in the United States of America, where institutions, the police and security services base their treatment of such individuals and groups on ethnic difference;

ALL. American Native peoples and indigenous peoples everywhere facing discrimination and degrading treatment base on racist traditions and ethnic difference;

LEADER: (for) black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) people in Britain, who continue to face institutional racism, daily, in employment, education, health services, criminal justice, public and private services, sport and sections of the media;

All: Lord, we pray for reconciliation and peace; renew in us your breath of life, of love, and of liberty that we may breathe freely; renew in us your breath of peace, filling the corridors of power with the breath justice, truth and peace, transforming cooperate and personal hearts and minds to love, to share. Lord, forgive us our trespasses and pardon us! Amen.

**Intercessory prayers
Covid-19 Pandemic and Windrush concerns**

LEADER: Lord, we lift before you:

bereaved families of all whose lives have sadly ended by the coronavirus pandemic;
giving thanks for their gift to us all, and the memories of their loved ones so tragically taken;

specialist front line workers, across essential medical, transport, service, and food industries; in particular, those from BAME communities most vulnerable, owing to historic ethnic, economic, educational, and cultural inequalities;

homeless persons, housed under the "Everyone In" initiative, who may now face eviction and re-eviction onto the streets;

carers, cleaners, food harvesters and all other frontline personnel at risks for our nation's health; those faced with the hostile environment and austerity that starves them of essential needs, despite their dedication to the health & well-being of us all;

restoration and reconciliation of persons of the 'Windrush generation', whose livelihoods have been ruined, legal rights cruelly removed under government's hostile environment policy, leading to homelessness, impoverishment, imprisonment, and unjust and inhumane deportations of black British immigrants, initially invited to help the national reconstruction following WWII;

the need to dismantle economic and political systems which degrade and treat inhumanely persons seeking international protection and safety, including refugees and persons seeking asylum, child refugees, often the victims of institutional racism;

acknowledgement, reconciliation, and reparations for historic damage to human well-being caused by the Transatlantic and modern enslavement of human beings, and the divisive disparities of colonialism on slave descendants;

ALL: Lord, renew in us your breath of life, of love, and of liberty that we may all breathe freely; renew in us your breath of peace, filling the corridors of power, and transforming political, cooperate and personal hearts and minds to love, to live, and to share afresh.

LEADER: In the name of the ONE who sets us free, Jesus Christ, our Lord, **Amen.**

Prayers for individuals

LEADER: Lord, we pray for those known personally who are sick or suffering medical, mental, emotional, or physical illness. [mention by name, if known; pause for quiet reflection].

We also pray for the many individuals who have been killed or maimed by violence and carelessness, by police, individuals in our communities and others. [mention by name, if known; pause for quiet reflection].

[Pause for reflection or add other needs]

All: Lord, renew in us your breath of life, of love, and of liberty that we may live without fear or violence; renew in us your breath of peace, filling us with courage to learn, help, support and heal afresh.

Concluding prayer of intercession

LEADER: Help us accept your breath of love, life, and liberty as our shared experience of humanity; to work together for justice, peace, and reconciliation; and that the whole human family can claim the breath of love, life, and liberty, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

LEADER: In the name of the ONE who sets us free, Jesus Christ, our Lord, **Amen.**

Prayer for and with young people

LEADER: We welcome everything that comes to us especially for our healing, learning and well-being; we welcome thoughts, feelings, emotions, lessons, persons, situations, conditions.

ALL: We ask you to continue fulfilling us with your love and grace, so that we learn more and new things; that we understand there is no space for hate and discrimination in our hearts and minds; all people are your creation, all people are equal, regardless age, disability, colour, ethnicity, gender or sex or sexuality.

Prayers of intercession

LEADER: Loving, forgiving God, we come recognize that in ethnicity we have no choice – we are who we have been made to be; we rejoice in our diversity, and our hearts lift at your great vision of a worshipping multitude, gathered from every nation, tribe, people, and language. We, nonetheless, recognize that our present reality is far from this truth.

ALL: Lord, help us to live as others live in the shared breath of life you gave us all!

We have each been shaped by different histories and systems; some of us have been ground down, whilst others have been built up; some have been worn away or have become fractured and broken; some have found life a burden, rather than a joy; none have experienced the perfect life.

LEADER: Some of us have been born white, in a world where whiteness confers privilege; others of us have been born black, in a world where darker skin carries disadvantage and death; we know that this is not the world as you would have it be, but it is our world, and it has been our experience.

LEADER: So, before you, and in the name of Jesus Christ who loves all people equally, regardless of ethnicity, skin colour, gender, social status, sex or sexuality, man or woman, we come now to recommit ourselves to your vision of the world.

LEADER: We come now to pray ‘your kingdom come, on earth as it is in heaven’, and to offer ourselves once to live out your coming kingdom of equality and justice in our lives, in our churches, and in our communities.

ALL: Lord, transform us that we live as you showed us, with all others, in the shared breath of the earthly life and love you gave us, regardless of difference! We confess our sins of thoughts, deeds, and failures to speak out against racism and injustice.

We confess those times when, as individuals and as churches, we have witnessed the fracturing of humanity along ethnic lines, and yet have remained

silent. We confess those times when we have been the powerful ones, and have chosen to withhold that power, whilst other human beings suffered.

**Lord, forgive us! Help us to live as you showed us, with all others, in the shared breath of the earthly life of love, regardless of difference!
Lord, help us to reconcile and live.**

Leader: In the name of the ONE who sets us free, Jesus Christ, our Lord, **Amen.**

Prayers for the Church

LEADER: We pray for our Churches

All: Enable us, by your gracious favour, to become persons of reconciled, where each human soul is valued, and where equality in Christ is a reality in our midst.

Forgive us those times, where we do not live out our calling as your people; enable us by your gracious favour to ensure our Churches model the new humanity of Christ, to those in our communities.

LEADER: We pray for our communities

ALL: Where there is division, let us we be the restoration; where there is inequality, show us the way to justice; where there is powerlessness, let us lift up the broken-hearted; where there is damage, teach us how to bring healing; where there is a lack of knowledge, teach us truth.

LEADER: In the name of the ONE who sets us free, Jesus Christ, our Lord, **Amen.**