

Faith and Society Files: Embracing the World

A Manifesto for building culturally inclusive communities

Guidance to help churches become truly inclusive of all cultures and influence the wider world around them. This resource includes eight group studies and sermons to help your church consider the issues, and practical suggestions for drawing up an action plan and policy.



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FOREWORD

There are no two ways about it. A follower of Jesus has got to take the issues in this resource seriously. Jesus spent his earthly ministry tearing down the walls that divided people, and through his death he showed his perfect love for all people without distinction or exception. As we follow Jesus we are commissioned to walk in his ways and to continue his ministry of liberation in our own day.

This is a tough call. Human beings go to extraordinary lengths to build walls of separation. There are the walls which separate black people from white people. But then there are innumerable walls that separate blacks from blacks and whites from whites. When I went to India in 1980 I was horrendously ignorant about Indians. I knew something about the caste system and was aware that the community amongst whom I was living was outcaste. But I had no idea about the fierce tribal distinctions between different kinds of outcaste people and the subtle distinctions that pervaded every quarter of Indian society. Time spent in Africa in more recent years has allowed me to understand that the distinctions between tribes is only the start of the walls that divide Africans from Africans. But why should I be surprised? This country is exactly the same with ethnic, regional and class distinctions that continue to fragment and confuse our life together. Walls are everywhere!

This impressive resource helps us to confront the walls of separation from a firmly biblical position. I am sure that every church would do well to work through this book and to reflect on its life with new eyes. Some churches may feel that these issues are not relevant for them – either because they are mono-cultural or because they have already reflected on these issues at length. The fact is that none of us will ever arrive at a time when these issues are 'sorted' – for sin delights in erecting walls and whilst we fall short of perfection there will always be work for us to do.

I am encouraged to see the willingness of so many churches to engage in these vital gospel issues and I pray that this resource will help to encourage that process of prayerful and honest reflection and that it will lead to loving and effective action.

Jonathan Edwards
General Secretary, Baptist Union of Great Britain 2006-2013

INTRODUCTION

Fear is one of the most powerful motivating forces there is, and sadly when it comes to discussing issues of 'race' and cultural inclusion, it is people's fears that often come to the surface. In a way it's not surprising when newspapers scream at us that we are being over-run by those from other countries, bringing new customs and traditions, which threaten our society. The truth though is often very different to what the headlines would have you believe.

What the headlines don't tell you as well is what it must be like to be a stranger in a strange land, living with people of a different language and culture, where you are the one who stands out in the crowd. The headlines also don't tell you what it's like to be born in this country and still not feel wholly accepted. They certainly also don't point out how over the centuries we have benefited from and enriched by those who have come to our shores.

This project began out of a local need. Early in 2005 the issue of migrant workers became a priority in the life of local communities in Norfolk and further afield. Through earlier work, I was aware of some extreme 'racism' and intolerance within the county. As I looked at this I discovered that although these workers were doing jobs that no one else wanted to do, they were not made welcome.

As a response to this situation a group of church leaders from many traditions, came together to discuss how churches should react to the problem. It was at one such meeting I opened my big mouth, put my 'size nines' in and suggested that we needed a prophetic manifesto spelling out why and how we should be culturally inclusive communities. This manifesto could then be offered to the wider community.

Further work led to the development of eight statements which form the foundation of this manifesto. We believe them to be firmly rooted in Scripture, and are a guide as to how we can become truly inclusive communities. These statements have been expanded upon through Bible Studies and Sermon Outlines, which we hope Churches will wish pursue over a number of weeks, possibly linking together Sunday Services with small group work.

I am very grateful for all the positive support and encouragement this project has received so far. I am also indebted to Ian Drummond and Wale Hudson-Roberts who have helped it to grow beyond an initial idea to become a whole scheme by which churches and other Christian organisations can work towards becoming culturally inclusive. We hope you enjoy being challenged as you work through this manifesto, but more importantly, that it goes some way to helping the excluded to be included.

Ian Bunce
Faith and Society Team, Baptist Union of Great Britain

Why a Culturally Inclusive Manifesto?

Even years after the events that led to their tragic deaths, the names of Anthony Walker and Stephen Lawrence still bring to sharp focus as to how intolerant modern British society can be. It is shocking to think that young people can be killed for the colour of the skin. However, given such happenings it is little wonder that for many people in our minority ethnic communities there is a deep sense of alienation.

The truth is that the majority of us do not understand what it is like to grow up in places where 'racial' abuse is an everyday occurrence, and where racially-motivated attacks happen all too often. We do not know what it is to feel that even though we might have been born in this country, that somehow we do not belong. What is even more tragic is when these tensions and attitudes find their way into the Church, leading people to sense that they are being shunned and excluded.

However, ethnic tensions in the Church are sadly nothing new. Take a look in the book of Acts for example. In Acts 2:44 we are told that 'All the believers were together and had everything in common'. Yet just a few pages later in Acts chapter 6 there is a division in the Church, which arises because the members of different ethnic groups felt they were being treated differently and 'the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food' (v1). It is often observed that ethnic and cultural exclusion frequently goes hand in hand with social and economic exclusion.

Therefore, if the early Church needed to learn to be culturally inclusive, how much more do we need to be reminded of this in today's rapidly changing society? For sadly large numbers of churches have failed to be culturally inclusive, or at least have only

paid lip service to the concept. Perhaps only welcoming those who have seemed like themselves, rather than those with different outlooks and backgrounds. This has led to divisions within the Church, which has resulted in different ethnic communities often worshipping in isolation from one another, a denial of the unity in Christ they proclaim, and in contradiction to the command of Christ to his disciples.

This is a situation which we feel in the light of Scripture needs to be challenged and changed, because being an inclusive community should be one of our core values as Christian churches. Therefore, we have produced this manifesto to encourage churches to think through some of the issues involved, and to reflect on what they might do to make all people feel respected and welcomed in their communities. While this manifesto concentrates on the issues around those of a different ethnic background, the principles equally apply to reaching those who, although they might have the same ethnic origin as the majority of members of a particular church, have a distinctly different culture.

We encourage you to work through this booklet carefully, and to be honest about how your church is doing as a culturally inclusive community. Through it we hope that churches will become beacons in their communities, showing that our differences actually enrich us, and should be welcomed rather than feared. The world has come to our doorstep the question is how warm a welcome are they going to receive?

The Background

For hundreds of years Britain has been a multi-ethnic society. We have learnt to live with people of a different cultural background, be they English, Welsh, Scots, Irish or many other cultures. In fact as we have got to know each other we have come to appreciate the culture of others, and to make some of their traditions our own. During the recent centuries too others

have come to our shores, often as a result of persecution elsewhere, and have settled here, bringing with them different cultures and skills, which we have also benefited from. In more recent times we have even invited others to come here and play a part in building our economy, and still today we actively recruit workers from other lands to come to these Islands.

We need to recognise as well that because of our colonial past, many people came to think that Britain was their 'Mother Country', a sentiment that was encouraged by the colonial powers at the time. Therefore, when they have faced persecution they have come to this land in expectation of finding a 'safe haven'. Recent examples would include the Asians expelled from Uganda by Idi Amin in the 1970s, and more recently those who left Hong Kong when it was handed back to China.

However, such influxes have not always been welcome. In the 16th century Queen Elizabeth I declared that there were too many immigrants. More recently there has been a rise in extremist political parties which have advocated the 'repatriation' of immigrants. But these calls have been highly discriminatory, often neglecting the many immigrants who come to us from places such as Australia and America, and instead focusing on those of African, Eastern European, or Asian descent.

The reason for this is that people are readily able to discriminate against those who are identifiable as being different to themselves because of their colour or language. It is also easy to discriminate against those perceived to be less powerful than yourself, in order to prevent them from gaining influence. Add to that the fact that they may include members of other faiths, and another aspect of discrimination becomes manifest. The sad truth is that over thirty years on from the passing of legislation to make it illegal, 'racial' discrimination is still rife in this country, even between different minority ethnic communities.

Myths and Truths

One of the aims of this booklet is to address some of the myths that exist about issues around ethnic and cultural inclusiveness, especially those surrounding asylum seekers and immigrants. Therefore, in various parts of this booklet you will find statistics and other facts which try to demonstrate what the true state of affairs is in order to shed light into what are often murky corners. We are concerned to do this in a balanced fashion, however, in truth reality is all too often very different to what the headlines say, and we suspect many people will be surprised when they discover what the facts really are on various issues.

How the Manifesto Works

The working group which put this manifesto together drew up eight core statements, which they felt reflected the challenge of Scripture into many of the issues we face around being ethnically and culturally inclusive. These statements are the foundation stones on which the rest of the manifesto has been built, and the first section of the manifesto introduces and unpacks these core principles.

Section two of the manifesto consists of eight group studies which pick up the theme of each of the core statements. These can be undertaken by home groups or by a larger church-wide gathering. Each study contains a number of practical activities, discussion questions, and an opportunity to think about how the principle being discussed could be applied to your own church or individual situation.

Following this section three contains a series of sermon outlines, each one based around one of the core statements. The sermon outlines can be adapted to be suitable for each church's situation, and complement the group studies, although they do not have to be done at the same time. Hopefully through both the studies and sermons people will be encouraged to think about and discuss the issues involved, as well as seeking to look at

ways in which they both as individuals and as Churches may become more ethnically and culturally inclusive.

Section Four encourages churches to take these issues further, and to help further we have designed a review and suggested Action Plan, which form part of the appendices to this document. These can be adapted by churches and used to suit their own situation. Part of this is to adopt a policy statement committing the church to be ethnically and culturally inclusive. This, we hope, will become a positive witness to local communities that their churches are serious about these issues, and are trying to reflect in every way they can the Gospel message they proclaim. In addition in the appendices there is a suggested procedure as to how to deal with racist attitudes in the Church.

We recognise that emotions often run high on these subjects, and so churches and individuals can shy away from dealing with them. However, we would encourage you to think about these statements carefully and to work through the issues, because it is our firm belief that by doing so our mission to the world will be strengthened. Indeed it would be our hope that time would be set aside within Deacons, Elders, Leadership and church meetings for these concepts to be discussed, and action plans drawn up to help churches become ethnically and culturally inclusive.

Finally at the back of the manifesto there is an evaluation form for churches to fill in to let us know how useful they have found this material. We hope you will take some time to fill it in and return it to us. Please feel free to photocopy any of the appendices.

Section One

THE CORE STATEMENTS

THE EIGHT STATEMENTS

We believe:

- 1 All people are created in God's image in whose eyes we are all equal.
- 2 God's great blessings need to be distributed equally to all people regardless of ethnic-origin or culture.
- 3 It is our duty and joy to welcome and embrace strangers, travellers, settlers and their families of all cultures into our community.
- 4 We can receive God's special blessing as we offer a true welcome, a home, material needs and care to all people.
- 5 Every person is our neighbour regardless of culture or ethnic origin, and is fully deserving of our unconditional love just as Christ commanded.
- 6 We should not be judgemental about anyone based on their appearance, ethnicity, culture and background, but to treat all people as individuals created and loved by God.
- 7 We are called to be different seeking to live according to Christ-like values, and to be salt and light to all cultures.
- 8 We believe that Jesus calls us to care for all people, but particularly to protect those who are the poorest and most vulnerable in our society.

We believe that where these principles either have been, or are being, violated there needs to be repentance, and a determination to re-build bridges, as well as to stand against injustice.

The Statements Unpacked

We would just like to take a few moments to unpack some of these statements, although please note that the Small Group Studies explore the issues in more detail.

Statement One: All people are created in God's image in whose eyes we are all equal.

This is the corner-stone to building a culturally inclusive community. There are no different races; we are all members of the one race, the human race. Therefore, no one ethnic-group is superior to another, every single human being is an individual created by God, unique, and with their own giftings and skills. It is not for one group to prosper at the expense of others, or even to claim that others are 'less than human'. As the apostle Paul clearly stated, there is to be no discrimination in the Kingdom, we are all equally in need of God's grace and we become equal members of his body.

Biblical References: Genesis 1:26 – 27; Revelation 7:9

Statement Two: God's great blessings need to be distributed equally to all people regardless of ethnic-origin or culture.

When the truth of statement one is ignored or overlooked it becomes easy for one ethnic-group to exploit another for its own ends. Sadly it is all too often the case that the wealth of some has come at the expense of others, usually those of a different culture. This exploitation has often been explained away on the grounds of 'racial' superiority, or with a veneer that speaks of seeking to empower those that are in fact being oppressed. However, God makes it clear throughout scripture that his good gifts are to be shared, and that our responsibility is to be a blessing to others.

Biblical References: Matt 7:9 -12; Isaiah 58:6 -10; Isaiah 61:1, 2; Acts 4:32 -35; Micah 6:8

Statement Three: It is our duty and joy to welcome strangers, travellers, settlers and their families of all cultures into our community.

Again throughout Scripture God speaks of our responsibility to welcome strangers and travellers to these lands. People often say that we should be a tolerant society, in fact we should be more than simply people who tolerate others, we should be people who respect and treat others as our equals in line with the principle of statement one. We should learn to enjoy the qualities of others, and to allow people every opportunity to use their gifts and talents in ways which are both enriching and fulfilling.

Biblical References: Zechariah 7:9, 10; Genesis 18; Romans 12:13; 1 Peter 4:9

Statement Four: We can receive God's special blessing as we offer a true welcome, a home, material needs and care to all people.

In fact scripture repeatedly states that as we offer a true welcome to others we ourselves will be rewarded. Scripture demonstrates it is in our own self-interest to be inclusive people, for through others we can be blessed, and also receive a heavenly reward. Therefore, we should be looking at how inclusive we are to others from different ethnic backgrounds and cultures, both as individuals and as churches.

Biblical References: Matt. 25:31ff; Hebrews 13:2; The Book of Ruth

Statement Five: Every person is our neighbour regardless of ethnic-origin or culture, and is fully deserving of our unconditional love just as Christ commanded.

The principle of statement one is that everyone is equal in the sight of God, this means that He loves each and every one

of us equally. Therefore, the consequence of this is that we should love one another equally regardless of background or ethnicity, just as Christ commanded. This, as we have said before, is more than simply tolerance it should be a genuine love and concern for the needs of others. We should seek to ensure that all people feel valued for who they are. Sadly this is not always the case, and it is a particular indictment when even those who are our brothers and sisters in Christ feel devalued and excluded.

Biblical References: Luke 10:25 – 37; Mark 12:28 – 31; John 13:34 - 35

Statement Six: We should not be judgemental about anyone based on their appearance, ethnicity, culture and background, but to treat people as individuals created and loved by God.

As has been said it is all too easy for people to discriminate against those who are readily identifiable as different from themselves. The principle of statement one must always be remembered and we must not judge according to stereotype or prejudice, but instead seek to get to know people as individuals. It is the responsibility of every Christian and every church to actively seek to break down the barriers which divide people from one another and to overcome fear and mistrust.

Biblical References: Acts 10:1 – 48; Ephesians 2:14 - 19

Statement Seven: We are called to be different seeking to live according to Christian values, and to be salt and light to all cultures.

We are called to treat people as individuals, loving and respecting all people along with their traditions. This means that we should not expect people to conform to 'our' customs, but to be ready to be inclusive of

theirs. Not to issue invitations to come over and meet with us, but to say: "When can we come and meet with you?" To make sure that every activity of the church reflects the diversity of cultures of those worshipping there, and in so doing to be a witness to our communities.

Biblical References: Matt 5:13 – 16; Col. 3:10 – 11; Romans 12:1 - 8

Statement Eight: We believe that Jesus calls us to everybody, but particularly to protect those who are the poorest and most vulnerable in our society.

Statement one has shown us that all are equal in the sight of God receiving his love in equal measure, while statement two tells us to share his blessings equally with others. There is one other right that all people have in scripture, and that is a right to justice - justice that does not discriminate on the grounds of colour, ethnicity, or culture. However, throughout our history we have not always had justice for all. People have been discriminated against because of poverty, and there has been one law for the rich and another for the poor. There has also been discrimination on the grounds of ethnicity or culture, with those that are different becoming the victims of the prejudices of others. It is our responsibility to challenge all such discrimination in our society, recognising when such injustices have occurred in our past, and using this knowledge to build a better future for all.

Biblical References: Amos 5:18 – 27; Exodus 23:9; Isaiah 61:1, 2; James 2:1-8

Section Two

CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES GROUP STUDIES

An Introduction for Leaders

First of all thank you for being willing to be a group leader for these studies. Rather than involving a major analysis of a particular bible passage, these studies are designed to help people think about some of the issues around racial justice, and what it means to be a culturally inclusive community.

There are eight studies each based one of the core statements of the Culturally Inclusive Manifesto. In the following section of this book you will find a set the members' notes along with a corresponding set of the leader's notes for each study; you will need to read the members' notes along with the leader's notes for each session. You are free to photocopy the members' notes for your group.

The studies include Group Exercises to get people thinking about that session's subject, written notes which people can look at to then explore the issues concerned, and questions for discussion. Many of the questions do not have one right answer, but hopefully they will bring out some of the principles outlined in the leader's notes during the discussion.

At the beginning of each session please take some time to introduce the subject of the session, and for reading the bible passage, as well as for prayer before proceeding with the study. When you reach the end of each session in addition to the suggested prayer, you might wish to leave some time for quiet personal reflection, and/or open prayer.

The materials you will need for each study are noted at the end of each set of leader's notes. You will need to ensure that you have a copy, either as a video or DVD, of the film *Remember the Titans*¹, which people will need to have viewed before the sixth session.

NB If you arrange a group viewing make sure your church has the appropriate licence for showing videos².

We hope you will enjoy leading these studies and that the members of your group will find them useful and thought-provoking. Please take time within the sessions to think about how some of the issues raised apply to your personal, and church's situation.

1 This film can be purchased at a reasonable price through various internet vendors, and has a PG rating.

2 For information on video licences for Churches contact the Church Copyright Licence Website at www.ccli.co.uk

GROUP STUDY – 1

PARTICIPANTS' NOTES

All people are created in God's image in whose eyes we are all equal (Gen 1:26-27).

Bible Study: 'Made in God's Image'

Genesis 1: 26-27

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Group Exercise

(Your Group Leader will tell you about all the Group Exercises in these studies)

How the World Is

A Baptist minister tells the story of how in 1986 he was invited to a big conference in Amsterdam arranged by the Billy Graham organisation. As he walked into the conference centre he was greeted by the sight of the 10,000 other delegates, but what really struck him was that three-quarters of the faces were not white. He said: "This was a life-changing moment for me as I was confronted with the reality of how the world is, and how insulated we are in this country from the truth of what the rest of the world is really like".

Can any of your group relate to this story, or have had a similar experience?

What is the Image of God?

What picture do the members of your group have of Jesus? If it's based on many of the traditional images we have he will be dressed in a flowing robe (usually gleaming white), sandals, with a fairly neat black beard, and yes of course will have a white European face.

A couple of years ago the BBC produced a series of programmes called 'Son of God', and in the publicity for the first programme they claimed that for the first time on television they would reveal the face of Jesus. This was a slight exaggeration because in truth what they did was a re-construction based on a male skull of the period found in Israel. This re-construction revealed a face which was round with quite heavily set features, and of course not white skinned. While this exercise did not of course reveal the true image of Jesus, it did make the point that the real Jesus would have looked very different from our traditional image of a white European male. However, all too often people have been guilty of imagining God in their own image, rather than the other way round.

In fact, the image of God is not to be found in how we look, in our physical appearance, but in our attitudes and values. However, sadly this image has been corrupted by the self-centredness and greed which have afflicted all peoples. In addition, our diversity is also a reflection of God, since there is diversity in the God-head of Father, Son and Spirit. Therefore through our encounters with other ethnic groups and cultures we can actually gain new insights into different facets of God's nature. One important truth we must grasp is that no one group or ethnic group carries the sole image of God.

Another key truth is that God only created one human race of which we are all part. At the tower of Babel (Genesis 11) God only confused the language of people, he did not create different races. This has been the invention of man not God. Furthermore part of the significance of the day of Pentecost was that everyone who heard the disciples heard the Gospel in their own tongue, the curse of Babel had been broken. This is something that should be reflected in our churches.

Questions

- 1 If all of us carry the image of God, how does this mean we should treat one another?
- 2 Can you think of times when a failure to recognise that all people bear the image of God has led to injustice?
- 3 How does the media (TV, newspapers etc.) influence the way we look at other ethnic groups?
- 4 How would the Church look if we truly believed we were all one race?

Application

As you conclude this study just take a few minutes to think about how you could practically demonstrate that we recognise the image of God in one another.

Prayer

Father thank you that you have made each of us in your image.
Thank you that each of us is a unique individual
Thank you especially that we have freedom of choice
But Father forgive us when we have failed to recognise that other people are also made in your image
If we have ever thought ourselves somehow superior to others
Lord help us to treat others as equals, and to demonstrate our respect of others in every way possible.
In Jesus' name. Amen

GROUP STUDY – 1

LEADER'S NOTES

All people are created in God's image in whose eyes we are all equal

Bible Study: 'Made in God's Image'
Genesis 1: 26-27

Aim

The aim of this study is to help people start thinking about some of the issues around building a culturally inclusive community, and in particular to help people recognise that we are all equal in the sight of God. A key issue is to get people to recognise that God only created one human race, and we are all part of it.

Introduction

If this is the first time the group has met take a few minutes to get people to introduce themselves. Then introduce today's subject, and read the Bible passage.

Group Exercise

Gather a selection of glossy magazines and ask the members of the group to cut out images of people from them to form a collage. Get them to look at the range of images they see and ask "Does this reflect the balance of people in the United Kingdom today?"

If you wish you can ask the members of the group what percentage of people in England and Wales come from the following ethnic backgrounds? These should include Chinese, Asian, Black, Mixed Race, and White. Next use this table to find the correct answers:

Population Group	% of Population in England and Wales
White	92.1
Asian or Asian British	4.0
Black or Black British	2.0
Chinese	0.4
Mixed Race	1.2
Other	0.4

Source: Census 2001, Office for National Statistics

How the World Is

The aim of this section is to get people to realise that the vast majority of the world's population is not white, whilst this country is still over 90% white.

The Image of God

Here the purpose is to make people realise that when the bible says we are made the image of God is not talking about a physical resemblance, but about our attitudes and values. For the first part of this discussion it might be an idea to have some copies of images of Jesus to illustrate the point being made.

The issue of there being only one human race is also significant, and must be dealt with seriously, because where Christians have misunderstood this principle there have been serious consequences. For example, the story of the tower of Babel was used by the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa to justify the apartheid system, and the separation of different 'races', which brought years of injustice to that land.

Guidelines for Answering the Questions

- 1 Try to encourage answers that talk about respecting others, and treating people equally, as well as recognising that they are individuals.
- 2 Classic examples would be the Nazis and World War Two, Slavery and the Slave Trade, 'racial' segregation in the USA, the apartheid regime in South Africa, Idi Amin's expulsion of Asians from Uganda in the 1970s, the conflicts in the Balkans and Rwanda. Plus many others.
- 3 All too often the media can have a negative influence, but also highlight positive stories. (Have some examples available eg the spontaneous peace march held in Burley, Leeds in the wake of the arrests following the bombings of 7 July 2005)
- 4 The key factor to be highlighted here is that the Church should be a place of great respect for all, where all are treated equally. Your church should be a place Jesus Christ himself would be proud to attend.

Application

Hopefully this should produce many ideas, but they should revolve around treating people as equals and with respect. Also on getting to know people, to discover more about them, and so build our understanding about God.

Items required for this Session

Copies of members' notes

Bibles

Supply of magazines and newspapers

Scissors

Glue

Large sheet of paper

Newspaper articles relating to issues of 'race'

Some traditional pictures of Jesus in white robes etc.

GROUP STUDY – 2

PARTICIPANTS' NOTES

God's great blessings need to be distributed equally to all people regardless of ethnic-origin or culture.

Bible Study: 'Sharing God's Gifts

Matthew 7:12

So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

Micah 6:8

...What does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

Group Exercise 1

The Consumer Society

Our economic system is built on the principle of consumerism, of people buying more and more things, which other people make, or using more and more services, which other people provide. Therefore, there is a need to provide new and different products that people never knew they actually wanted before, but soon feel are essential for living. For example, humankind has managed to exist for thousands of years without the mobile phone, but these are now considered essential items for many people. However, not everyone has benefited from this, over a billion people live in poverty throughout the world, and a third of children are malnourished. In truth many of our riches comes at the expense of the poorest people in the world. The demand for cheaper goods has all too often been met in many countries of the far-east and other areas by sweat-shop labour, or even modern-day slavery, regularly done by young children. Clearly we are not sharing God's blessings equally, but are instead potentially contributing to continuing injustice in the world.

Group Exercise 2

Ethnic Origin and Poverty

Whilst it is true that there are rich and poor people in all ethnic groups, sadly it is true that poverty is frequently linked to ethnic origin. Black and Asian peoples will often be among the poorest peoples of the world, whilst the white community are generally the more affluent (although this is not always the case). Even in a country like the United Kingdom such differences are evident. The table below shows both the average hourly wage for different ethnic groups in this country, and the unemployment rates for each group.

Ethnic Group	Average hourly earnings (£)	Unemployment Rate (%)
White	9.50	4.6
Mixed Race	8.52	13.1
Asian/Asian British	8.91	9.7
Indian	9.92	7.1
Pakistani/Bangladeshi	7.10	13.6
Black/Black British	9.04	12.4
African	8.92	12.2
Caribbean	9.29	12.6
Chinese	10.75	
N/A		

Source: Labour Force Survey

The reasons for such variations are quite complicated, and relate to educational opportunities etc. However, the table shows that ethnic origin plays a part both in people's employment opportunities, and also what each group earns.

A Christian Response

Clearly if we as Christians consider that all human beings carry the image of God, then we need to ensure that they are treated justly. How then might we respond to this economic injustice? A radical response might be found in Acts 2:44,45, where we are told that such was the concern of the believers in the early Church for one another, that they even sold their possessions to meet each other's needs. Perhaps as Christians we do

need to think about the sort of lifestyle we lead, and whether others suffer injustice so that we can enjoy cheaper prices. We should especially be concerned that all people of each and every ethnic group should be able to enjoy the blessings of God, both spiritual and material, in equal measure.

Questions

- 1 In the passage from Matthew 7:12 Jesus says that we should 'do to others what you would have them do to you', how does this apply here?
- 2 What excuses do we sometimes use to stop ourselves helping others?
- 3 What would real justice look like on this issue?

Application

Think about what we can do practically as individuals, and within our churches and communities to try and ensure that every person can enjoy the blessings of God.

Prayer

Father we thank you for the great blessing we have in living in this country
For freedom and material wealth, for health and social services, and for support for the disadvantaged.

Forgive us when we fail recognise how blessed we are as a nation, and when we try to be selfish with what you have given us.
Help us to remember that we have not earned your blessing.

But make us willing to share your blessing with others.

To have a concern for all people, that they might receive their fair share of this world's wealth. Amen.

GROUP STUDY – 2

GROUP LEADER'S NOTES

God's great blessings need to be distributed equally to all people regardless of ethnic-origin or culture.

Bible Study: 'Sharing God's Gifts
Matthew 7:12; Micah 6:8

Aim

The aim of this study is to get members of the group to think about how often economic wealth is divided along ethnic lines.

Introduction

Spend a few minutes reviewing the previous session then read the bible passage before going into the first group exercise.

Group Exercise 1

Get members of the group to think about the different things they now have in their homes to what they would have had ten years ago, twenty years ago and fifty years ago. Then discuss how many of the things we now consider essentials, but which were luxuries years ago.

How many of the things you have in your homes could you really live without and still have a comfortable life?

The Consumer Society

Here we want people to think about what is essential for living and what are really luxuries, as well as recognising that all too often our wealth can come at the expense of others.

Group Exercise 2

If a member of your group has been to a third world country, ask them to describe the contrast between the rich and poor they saw there. (Have a story ready just in case)
Can the group think of any times Jesus addressed issues of poverty in his day?

Examples would be his reading of Isaiah 61 in the Synagogue (Luke 4); the story of the wedding feast (Luke 14); the story of the rich

man and Lazarus (Luke 16), the separation of the sheep and goats (Matt 25), the widow's offering (Luke 21) etc.

Ethnic Origin and Poverty

The aim of this section is to make people realise that even in this country your ethnic origin can be a factor in how rich or poor you are.

A Christian Response

Spend a few minutes reflecting on the passage from Acts 2, and how it is a challenge to us today.

Guidelines for Answering the Questions

- 1 Get the group to think about how they feel if they were exploited, and what it says about us as Christians if our life-style causes suffering for others.
- 2 Excuses are many: No-one's really poor in this country, those who are poor are lazy, people need to learn to look after themselves, other countries have corrupt governments, aid doesn't get where it's needed, they have too many people etc, etc. Think about whether these excuses are valid.
- 3 Things such as proper oversight by all nations of pay and conditions for workers, import regulation to prevent countries profiting at the expense of others. Ensuring that profits from businesses are used to benefit the countries from which they are derived, could be some thoughts on this subject.

Application

Talk about being concerned about economic justice, and fair-trade issues. Look at how you can be generous as individuals, churches and as a nation. The sort of issues that might be worth looking at include: Considering becoming a Fair Trade church, and the members of the group buying Fair Trade products in supermarkets. Are there needs even within our own churches and communities which need to be met say by a 'fellowship' fund or similar? Alternatively what about setting up a food/furniture or clothing bank?

Items required for this Session

Members' Notes

Bibles

Sample materials on Fair-Trade, and economic justice

GROUP STUDY – 3

PARTICIPANTS' NOTES

It is our duty and joy to welcome strangers, travellers, settlers and their families of all cultures into our community

Bible Study: 'Welcoming Strangers'

Zechariah 7:9, 10

This is what the Word of the Lord Almighty says: 'Administer true justice; show mercy and compassion to one another. Do not oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. In your hearts do not think evil of each other'.

Group Exercise 1

A Warm Welcome?

In the last study we considered how affluent we have become as a society, but how not everybody enjoys the same material blessings. Another fact is that the more possessions we have the harder we seem to have to work at holding on to them. Think about how many houses in your streets now have burglar alarms, security grills or even closed-circuit television. There seems to be a rising tide of fear of people coming and taking what we have, whether its burglars in our homes, or people coming to this country in need.

The term 'asylum seeker' often stirs up very negative images, usually as a result of what we read in the newspaper or see on our televisions. Whilst we have to accept that some people coming to this country do not have genuine reasons to seek asylum, the vast majority do. These people come in fear of persecution, even torture and death if they returned to their own countries. Once their claims are accepted they officially become 'refugees'. Over 60% of refugees are taken in by countries in Africa and Asia, Europe looks after just 25%, while the UK is the home to less than 3% of the total³. The

³ The Truth about Asylum' published by the Refugee Council

truth is that the poorest nations often accept the largest amount of refugees. Asylum seekers in the UK also do not receive large handouts, their income levels are set at some 30% below those on Income Support.

Question

How well do we do in fulfilling the command from Zechariah 7:9, 10?

Group Exercise 2

Migrant Workers

Other groups of people who come to this country are migrant workers. In the 1950s and 60s there was a positive policy of bringing in unskilled workers to do the menial jobs that others would not do. The same is true today. One instance is the agricultural industry in Lincolnshire, which is heavily dependent on migrant workers. However, too there is a policy to attract skilled workers, for example, doctors and nurses for the Health Service, and Information Technology workers. These workers can come from all over the world, and in many places our statutory services would collapse without them, but all too often they feel that they are treated as unwelcome strangers.

Alienated Communities

There is also a further group of people, those who had lived in this country for many years, or who were born in this country, and yet still feel unaccepted by society. They can often suffer verbal or physical attacks, and this leads to a sense of fear, and even further alienation. How should we be responding to them?

Questions

- 1 How well do we do at looking after the 'alien within our gate'?
- 2 Are there any attitudes or actions that we have done that maybe have contributed to the alienation of others, which maybe we need to repent of?
- 3 What would have happened if Jesus, Mary and Joseph had been refused entry to Egypt in Matthew chapter 2?

A Christian Response

If you go to New North Road Baptist Church in Huddersfield on a midweek lunch-time you will find a basement room that's a hive of activity. The church has responded to the needs of asylum seekers and refugees that have been settled in the town by opening up a drop-in centre. Here they can receive advice and support, a simple meal, clothing and company. There is even the opportunity to learn computing and other skills.

Are there asylum seekers and refugees or migrant workers, or overseas students in your area, and what could you do to help them?

Prayer

God of peace and welcome,
in story and in action
you have shown us through Jesus
that to love the stranger is to love our
neighbour.
Teach us so to do our duty
until our duty becomes our joy
and such joy becomes the touchstone
of our communities,
as we learn to live with eyes and minds and
hearts open like his.
AMEN.

GROUP STUDY – 3

GROUP LEADER'S NOTES

It is our duty and joy to welcome strangers, travellers, settlers and their families of all cultures into our community

Bible Study: 'Welcoming Strangers'

Zechariah 7:9, 10

Aim

The aim of this session is to explore some of the issues around asylum seekers and refugees, and to demonstrate that maybe some of the things that are said about this issue are not necessarily true. (Good resources for this session are *Welcoming the Stranger* published jointly by the BUGB and BMS, also the Refugee Council's website at www.refugeecouncil.org.uk or the UN Refugee website at www.unhcr.org.uk)

Introduction

Again spend a few minutes reviewing the previous study before introducing this week's subject, and reading the bible passage. You might also care to use some newspaper headlines.

Group Exercise 1

A married couple without children who seek asylum in this country are provided with basic housing, electricity and gas, and are then given £61.71⁴ per week for food, clothing, transport, etc,. This adds up to about 30% less than those on income support. Ask the group how easy they would find it to live on this sum of money? (Please bear in mind that by government regulation those seeking asylum are not allowed to work or earn extra income).

You might want the group to draw up sample budget; does their budget leave room for luxuries, trips out etc?

⁴ As at November 2005

A Warm Welcome?

This is an opportunity to think about how we welcome people to this country. One fact we wish to come through is that Britain which has the world's fifth largest economy, takes only 3% of the world's refugees, whilst the majority of refugees are taken in by the poorest nations.

The group can then reflect on that in the light of Zechariah 7:9, 10.

Group Exercise 2

Ask the group how they would feel if they had to flee this country because they feared being put in prison, or killed, and arrived in a country with no money, no family, and either could not speak the language at all or only basically. How would they hope to be treated?

Migrant Workers

The purpose of this section is make people realise that in fact many immigrants to this country are encouraged to come here, and that we depend on them to keep our services running. In fact even the future of our pension system could depend on them.

Alienated Communities

We have to recognise as well that this issue is not a new one, and that there are people who came to this country years ago who still do not feel part of this nation. This is an issue we will pick up on next time.

Guidelines for Answering the Questions

- 1 General Discussion
- 2 The group might think about the ways that groups that have come here in the past have been treated (see page 6). In a later study we will be looking at the reasons why the Church became culturally divided in the 1950s and 60s.
- 3 An interesting piece of speculation, and links to the discussion of how you determine genuine asylum seekers is to ask 'Would Joseph and Mary have been granted asylum in this country today?' eg what evidence did they have that they were in danger ? Why didn't they go back to Nazareth? Etc.

A Christian Response

Brainstorm some ideas in the group.
(For information on asylum seekers or refugees in your area, and what you could do to help contact your local social services, or voluntary support agency, or the Refugee Council.)

Items required for this Session

Members' Notes

Bibles

Information to draw up a household budget

Newspaper headlines about asylum seekers

GROUP STUDY – 4

PARTICIPANTS' NOTES

We can receive God's special blessing as we offer a true welcome, a home, material needs and care to all people.

Bible Study: 'Entertaining Strangers'

Hebrews 13:2

Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some people have entertained angels without knowing it.

Group Exercise

A Multi-ethnic Nation

In truth the United Kingdom has been a multi-ethnic society for thousands of years, just take a look at the list you have made. The first black African is recorded as being in England in Roman times. In fact most people's DNA in this country contains traces from the DNA of Angles, Saxons, Danish Vikings and Ancient Britons. Throughout our history as well we have welcomed groups of people from other parts of the world, many of them fleeing persecution.

Over the last two hundred years, though, with the increase in availability and ease of mass transportation, the movement of people between nations has increased dramatically. This means that our society is changing in its ethnic make-up at a faster rate than at any time in our history. Many people see this as a threat. However, in truth, as we saw in the last study we actually need many of the skills those coming to this country bring. They also contribute to the economy. For example, Home Office research shows that overall in 1999/2000 migrants contributed £31.2 billion in taxes, while consuming £28.8 billion in services and benefits. Therefore migrants contributed around £2.4 billion to the British Economy.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ www.unhcr.org.uk/info/briefings/asylum_issues/myths.html

In addition throughout history we have often benefited greatly from those who have come to our shores. Among recent refugees who have come to this country were: Victor Hugo, the French novelist; Sigmund Freud, the founder of modern psychoanalysis; Michael Marks, founder of Marks and Spencer; and Alec Issigonis, who was the brain behind the original Mini car and the Morris Minor.

It is also worth thinking about the contribution many people from other nations made to the defence of Britain during both world wars. In the Second World War, for example, one in eight pilots involved in the RAF in 1940 was Polish. There were also pilots from many other nations. In addition, thousands of West Indians signed up as air and ground crew, along with hundreds of Indians and Africans.

Questions

- 1 Britain may have been a multi-ethnic society for hundreds of years, but has it always been 'culturally-inclusive'?
- 2 Do you think we have benefited as a nation from being open to those from other lands?
- 3 Have you had an experience of welcoming a stranger that has proved a blessing to you?

The Story of Ruth

The story of Ruth in the Old Testament is an interesting one. Naomi is forced with her husband Elimelech to leave their home in Bethlehem and flee to the land of Moab, because of famine. Their two sons married Moabite women, one of whom is Ruth, suddenly all the men die, and the women are left behind. Naomi therefore decides to return to her homeland, and, despite Naomi's protestations, Ruth was determined to go with her. So it is that these two destitute women return to Bethlehem.

One of the laws of Moses was that the poor were to be allowed to follow the harvesters in the field picking up the grain they missed. Ruth decides that she will follow the workers

in the field of a man named Boaz. Boaz is a good man, and when he sees this woman following the workers in his field he tells her not to go anywhere else. Boaz also tells his workers not to harm her, because he was afraid that some of them did not respect the law to take care of strangers, particularly Moabites. Instead he instructs them to leave extra grain behind for her.

Well to cut the story short, love is soon in the air, and Boaz and Ruth get married. They have a son Obed, who in turn has a son called Jesse, who also has a son named David, who became rather well known after an incident with a giant called Goliath. This is how the greatest King in the history of Israel, had a Moabite for a great-grandmother.

The story has a message of course, Boaz, because he welcomed a stranger found himself a wife, and was blessed. However, the story did not end there, because many years later there was another descendant of the line of Ruth and David, a boy named Jesus. Therefore, because of his kindness in welcoming a stranger Boaz gained a wife, and we gained a Saviour.

Questions

- 4 What does the story say about the need to welcome people from other lands?
- 5 Boaz was blessed because he obeyed God's commands, how might this apply to us today?
- 6 How did Jesus say in Matthew 25 that people would be judged?
- 7 What does this say about our priorities today?

Prayer

Father we pray for all those who are refugees in the world today.

For those who have had to flee their homes because of persecution, war or disaster.

We pray for the nations that give them refugee and for all the aid agencies that seek to relieve their suffering.

Father help us too to play our part in bringing relief to those in need, by providing aid for those nations that offer hospitality to refugees, and also by being generous in welcoming those in need to this land also.

Thank you also for those who come with skills and gifts which benefit us, help us make them feel welcome too. Amen.

GROUP STUDY – 4

GROUP LEADER'S NOTES

We can receive God's special blessing as we offer a true welcome, a home, material needs and care to all people.

Bible Study: 'Entertaining Strangers'
Hebrews 13:2

Aim

Following on from last session the aim of this session is to get people to see that welcoming people to this country can actually bring benefits.

Introduction

Review the previous session, and explain that this study links with it by reading the Bible passage. (You might also need to prepare the ground for session six by having a copy of the film *Remember the Titans* available for people to take away and watch).

Group Exercise

Get the group to make a list of all the different groups of people that have come to this country in the last 2000 years, eg the Romans, Normans etc., and think about what contribution each group has made to the nation.

Such groups include:

Romans, Angles, Vikings, Saxons, Normans.

A Multi-ethnic Nation

The simple aim of this session is to get people to recognise that we have been a multicultural nation for years. That in fact those coming to this country add to our resources rather than drain them, and have even laid down their lives in our defence.

Guidelines for Answering the Questions

- 1 The group might think about how different ethnic groups have tended to live in the same areas, has this been out of choice, economic necessity, or fear?

What welcome did some of these groups receive, were their needs always taken into account, and were they allowed to contribute fully to our society?

- 2 Hopefully the group will see that in recent times the influence has been more positive than negative.
- 3 An opportunity for people to share personal stories.

The Story of Ruth

A well known biblical story, but people might not have thought about it this way. It might be good to take a few minutes to reflect upon it.

Guidelines for Answering the Questions

- 4 Hopefully people will get the point that extending such a welcome might bring unexpected rewards.
- 5 Such blessings might include special skills, and gifts, to be able to bring a different approach to solving some of the problems which face us. In a spiritual sense there are many strong Christians coming to these shores, who could be of real service to churches, and their mission.
- 6 Essentially that we would be judged according to how well we put the commands of God into action.
- 7 Maybe to recognise we have a responsibility to minister to people's physical, mental and emotional needs, as well as their spiritual ones.

Items required for this Session

Members' Notes

Bibles

Some history books

Copy of *Remember the Titans* DVD or video (Please note if you show it to the group you will need a special licence if your church does not have one)

GROUP STUDY – 5

PARTICIPANTS' NOTES

Every person is our neighbour regardless of ethnic-origin or culture, and is fully deserving of our unconditional love just as Christ commanded.

Bible Study: 'A Duty to Love'

John 13:33 – 38

A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

Group Exercise 1

A Welcoming Community?

The first disciples were a pretty odd bunch of fishermen, tax-collectors, and zealots. They were also a head-strong lot, and throughout Jesus' ministry they had many disputes. However, on the night He was betrayed Jesus commanded this group to 'Love one another', not just get-along, or tolerate each other, but to love one another with a love that would be a witness to the world. As we saw in study one the early Church did indeed seek to model that love, and had a sense of community which witnessed to the world around them. However, sadly the Church has not always lived up to Christ's command, and even Christians have been made to feel like outsiders.

Such was the experience of many of the immigrants, many of whom had fought for this country during the war, and who arrived in this country in the 1950s and 60s. They had often left family and friends behind, but they still had their faith, and so it was natural when they arrived in their new country to seek out the place they felt sure they would be welcomed. However, the following experience is typical of what all too often they were told:

"On my first Sunday in Birmingham my friends and I, we put on our best suits and went to the church. But after the service the vicar told us not to come again. His congregation wouldn't like it he said."⁶

Questions

- 1 Have you ever been to a place where you were told not to come again, or made to feel really unwelcome?
- 2 If Jesus had been in that place what might He have done?
- 3 What can lead churches to respond in this kind of negative fashion, and how can these issues be addressed?

Consequences

In fact often the only churches in which these immigrants found welcome were mainly the black-led Pentecostal Churches. Therefore, many of these people even though they were Anglican, Methodist or Baptist by background, made their spiritual homes in these churches isolated from their white brothers and sisters in Christ. The feeling of hurt and rejection that these Christians experienced have stayed with many of them for all their lives and in some cases has been passed on to succeeding generations. This background combined with the many instances of discrimination and abuse that not only the original immigrants, but also the generations that have been born in this country since, have experienced have simply added to the sense of isolation, suspicion and fear, which many ethnic communities feel in this country.

This is also not a problem of the past but is still being experienced by some communities in this country today. It is also not a just a 'white-black' or 'British-Eastern European' etc issue, because there are cases in which members of one ethnic minority have been made unwelcome at churches where a different ethnic minority predominates.

⁶ Black in Birmingham, Birmingham ILT Services, 1987, p71.

Group Exercise 2

One Response to the Divided Church

In Leeds a group of Christian leaders drawn from both the white-majority and black-majority churches have been meeting for a number of years in order to try and overcome some of the mistakes of the past, and build better links between the churches. This has been a difficult road at times. However, it has led to a greater understanding and trust between the churches, and even to a number of joint events, which have usually been held in the premises of the black-majority churches. In addition, it has been felt that the existence of the group has aided the church in the city in its work and witness to the wider world.

Questions

- 4 Why do you think that the joint events are usually held at the Black-majority churches?
- 5 How do you think it might have aided the Church in its wider witness?

Application

Why not consider building links with a church which is led by those from a different cultural background? Maybe you could organise a food festival, or learn about each other's history, as well as experiencing each other's patterns of worship.

Prayer

Father it saddens us to think that even our brothers and sisters in Christ were not welcomed by Christian communities in this country when they came to this land.
Father we pray for forgiveness, where we or our churches have been at fault.
We pray too that there might be a move to resolve the issues of the past so that the Body of Christ might be united.

We pray for the exercise of humility, forgiveness and reconciliation among our churches, so that the past may be put behind us, and we may move into the future together. Amen.

GROUP STUDY – 5

GROUP LEADER'S NOTES

Every person is our neighbour regardless of ethnic-origin or culture, and is fully deserving of our unconditional love just as Christ commanded.

Bible Study: 'A Duty to Love'

John 13:33 – 38

Aim

The aim of this session is to make people realise that at times even the Church has not been welcoming to those from different ethnic groups and cultures, and to recognise some of the consequences of that.

Introduction

Again review the last session, and introduce this week's topic. Also remind people about watching *Remember the Titans* before the next session.

Group Exercise 1

Get the group to imagine that they have moved into a new house. It very rapidly becomes clear to them that everyone else in the neighbourhood seems different to them, and they have very different customs. How would they feel?

What would they do to try and make friends in that situation?

What would help them?

A Welcoming Community?

This could well be a challenging section to those who were part of the Church during the 1950s and '60s, and some might become very defensive. The aim here should be to recognise that mistakes were made during that period, mistakes which have had consequences even for today. However, rather than seeking retribution, the aim here should be to look for a way forward, so that Christians of different cultures can be reconciled.

Guidelines for Answering the Questions

- 1 An opportunity to share some experiences of what it is like to feel unwelcome.
- 2 It might be useful to look at the story of Jesus and the man born blind (John 9), the parable of the lost sheep (Luke 15), and also Jesus clearing the Temple to get the discussion going.
- 3 Fear and misunderstanding are two of the major factors, talk about building relations, and promoting understanding could be good positive approaches. (this subject will be dealt with more fully in the next session).

Consequences

One of the myths that has been around is that those who came from the Caribbean churches had Pentecostal tendencies, in fact it is not so, the vast majority came from traditional churches, with traditional worship patterns. However, when they came to this country they were turned away by the traditional churches of whose denominations they were members. (A useful resource is the book *Captivity in Babylon* by Kenneth Leach)

Group Exercise 2

(If your Church has experienced a major split recently you might wish to omit this exercise or come up with an alternative)

Imagine a dispute has broken out in your church, and one group of people have threatened to leave because of a particular issue.

What steps would your group take in order to try and reconcile the situation?

What things would need to be recognised and dealt with?

How would your group help the church to move forwards?

Here hopefully people will talk about the need for people to sit down and listen to one another, for people to recognise when mistakes have been made, and to be

willing to admit their faults. Then too there needs to be the exercise of forgiveness and reconciliation, so that the church can move forward together.

(For further resources on this subject please see the London Mennonite Centre website at www.menno.org.uk or the booklet *Journeying Through Conflict* by Vivienne O'Brien (nee Lassetter) and Ernie Whalley published by Baptist Union Publications)

One Response to a Divided Church

Hopefully the group will see that this is an outworking of the principles they came up with in the Group Exercise.

Guidelines for Answering the Questions

- 4 In truth this is because the feeling of hurt amongst the black churches has run very deep, and so it is about re-building trust. Therefore, the white-led churches felt they had to go to the black churches as an expression that they were willing to be on their 'territory' and allow them control.
- 5 It has been felt it has helped in the witness of the Church to the wider community, in demonstrating that the Church is willing to practise reconciliation, and is concerned to be culturally inclusive. This has given it much greater credibility in the eyes of others, including some significant individuals and groups in the city.

Application

Make sure you don't just talk about forming links, but actually do something about it.

Items required for this Session

Members' Notes

Bibles

Video or DVD for session 6

GROUP STUDY – 6

PARTICIPANTS' NOTES

We should not be judgemental of anyone based on their appearance, ethnicity, culture and background, but to treat people as individuals created and loved by God.

Bible Study: 'Breaking Down Barriers'

Ephesians 2:14 – 19

For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility...

Group Exercise

Building Bridges Not Walls

Fear builds barriers. In the film *Remember the Titans* there is a scene where the white captain of the football team Gerry Bertier lies paralysed in a hospital following a car accident. His black friend Julius Campbell comes to visit him. In a touching scene Gerry has to admit that when they first met he was afraid, and fear led to prejudice and built a wall between them both. Then he makes the statement "I was afraid of my own brother".

If we are to build a culturally inclusive community then we are going to have to break down some walls, and overcome prejudice, and not just with our Christian brothers and sisters. A MORI survey in 2001 asked people if they knew someone who was prejudiced against people from a different ethnic background 43% said 'yes'.⁷ However, the same survey found that where those interviewed personally knew someone from a different minority group, the level of prejudice they expressed halved.

It is all too easy to stereotype others. For example, many Asian Christians feel they have been discriminated against, because

7 MORI Stonewall Citizenship Project on Racial Prejudice (May 2001), recorded in *Public Attitudes and Ethnic Minorities in the UK* published by the Performance and Innovation Unit of the Cabinet Office, July 2001

people assume that they are Muslims, Sikhs, or Hindus. Christian Asian women who wear saris have particularly been susceptible to such treatment, because people assume that the sari is a religious symbol rather than a cultural one.

The problem with prejudice is that it opens the door to overt discrimination and even hatred. The cases of the murders of Stephen Lawrence and Anthony Walker are the worst cases of a deep-seated and extensive 'racial' hatred in this country. In 2004 the police in England and Wales recorded no less than 52,700 crimes, which involved some form of racism.⁸

Racism is also not a problem for cities in fact some of the most rural areas, are reporting a steep rise in racist incidents. In Cumbria, West Mercia, Cleveland, Hampshire and Staffordshire there were nearly 3,500 racist incidents in 2004, more than double the figure for the year 2000.⁹ A significant number of 'racial' incidents also occur between those of different ethnic minorities; while in the year 2002/3 the Metropolitan Police reported that nearly 30% of the victims of 'racial' crimes were white.¹⁰

Questions to Discuss

- 1 What is prejudice?
- 2 In what ways do people/communities show prejudice?
- 3 What should Christians do when they witness prejudice (a) in church, (b) outside of the church, (c) in family conversation?
- 4 Can you be a Christian and 'racially' prejudiced?

Jesus, the Breaker of Barriers

Throughout his ministry Jesus broke down barriers. Jesus reached out and touched those with leprosy. He ate with tax-collectors and prostitutes, and in so doing challenged the hypocrisy of the religious leaders against

8 Jay Rayner, *Racist attacks on the rise in rural Britain*, Guardian Unlimited, March 2005

9 Rayner, op cit

10 Liberty and Law Journal, March 2004.

those they considered to be sinners. On a journey through Samaria, which in itself was something a Jew would not normally do, he engaged in conversation with a Samaritan woman, and even took water from her. He also used a Samaritan as an example of how people should obey God's greatest commands.

Jesus was therefore the one who all through his life stood up against prejudice, and spoke up on behalf of the oppressed. In fact throughout his ministry the only group of people who Jesus repeatedly condemned, were those who were prejudiced against others.

What then can we learn from the life and ministry of Jesus about dealing with prejudice?

Building Bridges

In the aftermath of the 7 July London bombings in 2005, one Baptist church decided to try to improve relationships with the Muslim community in its area. They therefore wrote to a local mosque, and arranged for church members to go and visit various members of the Muslim community there. Some feared that they would be given a hard time by the people they met. Therefore, it was something of a surprise when much of the evening was spent answering questions from the leaders of the Mosque about the meaning of the Lord's Supper. As a result there has been an on-going dialogue between the church and the Mosque. Other churches have also formed links with local synagogues or Hindu or Sikh Temples. Rather than leading to a 'watering down' of faith, it is interesting to note that often members of other faiths honour those Christians who stand firm in their Christian values and beliefs, while still respecting the beliefs of others.

Application

In your group think of how you personally and as a church can start to build bridges with members of other cultural communities (not necessarily of a different faith). Think about issues such as: Is it enough to invite people to come to you, or do you need to go to them?

Prayer

Father forgive us when fear and a lack of understanding puts up barriers between us. Forgive us too if we have been guilty of culturally prejudice in our thoughts or actions. Help us to look at ourselves honestly, and admit any feelings of prejudice we might have.

Help us instead to break down the barriers that divide.

Help us as a church and as individuals to reach out to others, in order to build trust and understanding.

Help us to build bridges with those in our communities, even with those of a different faith to our own. Amen.

GROUP STUDY – 6

GROUP LEADER'S NOTES

We should not be judgemental of anyone based on their appearance, ethnicity, culture and background, but to treat people as individuals created and loved by God.

Bible Study: 'Breaking Down Barriers'
Ephesians 2:14 – 19

Aim

The aim of this session is to help people see that each of them need to recognise the barriers that separate them from others, and that these barriers should be broken down in order to fulfil Christ's command.

Introduction

Review the previous session, and say that it shows us that even Christians can be divided by the colour of their skins. Read the bible passage, and allow a time of quiet reflection. Then say that this session we are going to look at what causes these barriers, and how we can break them down.

Group Exercise

Hopefully by now everyone will have had the chance to see the film *Remember the Titans*¹¹, which is based on the true story of how an American High School football team helped unite a culturally divided community. The film is very touching, funny and powerful as it charts the struggle of a community to overcome its divisions. (Alternatively if your church has the appropriate licence you can show the scene from the film where Julius comes to the hospital following Gary Bertier's accident).

Discuss together how the film illustrates some of the things we have been talking about in this study series, and what it said to the members of the group about being a culturally inclusive community.

¹¹ This film can be purchased at a reasonable price through various internet vendors, and has a PG rating.

Do not allow the group to be distracted by 'red herrings', such as that it's about America, or American Football, or it was back in the '70s and not today, etc. Get people to recognise the key principles about what causes barriers, and how they are broken down.

Building Bridges Not Walls

This section leads on from the previous discussion, pointing out that it is fear that builds bridges, as well as the extent of prejudice there is in this country. It also points out how often this prejudice leads to 'racial' abuse and even violence. (Stephen Lawrence was the teenager murdered by a gang in London in 1993, his killers were never caught, and the case led to a major public inquiry. Anthony Walker was the teenager murdered with an axe in July 2005 for being black; his killers were brought to justice.)

One other thing this section points out is that the cause of racism is not large numbers of immigrants in an area; racism is an attitude that also manifests itself even in those areas where the numbers of those belonging to different ethnic groups is relatively low. We also point out that racism is not just against those from ethnic minorities, white people can be victims too.

Guidelines for Answering the Questions

- 1 It is about pre-judging people simply based on supposed stereo-types.
- 2 With our attitudes, the fact that we are friendly to some people and ignore others, we can be afraid of those different to ourselves.
- 3 Here the need is to look at issues around circumstances in which the remarks were made, differentiating between unthinking remarks, as opposed to calculated comments, and also how one might intervene in such a situation. Referring to the principles set out in Appendix D of this book would be helpful in a Christian context.
- 4 An interesting question that is to do with grace and the work of the Holy Spirit.

There are those in extreme political parties that claim to be Christians, and these parties also claim to defend the Christian values of this country, but do they?

Jesus, the Breaker of Barriers

This section is an outline of some of the principles to be seen in Jesus' ministry, with an opportunity to discuss them at the end. Illustrations might well include Jesus healing lepers, Jesus and Zacchaeus (Luke 19), Jesus and Bartimaeus (Mark 10).

Building Bridges

This section shares one church's personal response to the July 2005 London bombings, and also raises the issue of inter-faith dialogue.

Application

Try and come up with some real practical suggestions, such as a food festival, or multi-cultural event. Hopefully people will remember some of the principles of the last session about reaching out to others, visiting them where they are, and the reasons for doing that. Maybe even take some practical organisational steps to get something off the ground.

Items required for this Session

Members' Notes

Bibles

Copy of *Remember the Titans* DVD or video (Please note if you show it to the group you will need a special licence if your church does not have one)

GROUP STUDY – 7

PARTICIPANTS' NOTES

We are called to be different seeking to live according to Christian values, and to be salt and light to the nations. We are called to be salt and light to the nations. (Matthew 5:13-16)

Bible Study: 'Different but Equal'

Colossians 3:10-11

You have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its creator. Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

Group Exercise

Blind, Sensitive or Inclusive?

Imagine you had a vegetarian, or someone on a medical diet, come to your house for a meal, would you deliberately choose to serve them meat, or something that they could not eat? Of course not! You would at least be sensitive to the needs or beliefs of the person concerned, and only give them what they could eat. You might go even further and eat the same food as you have served them, so that they feel included, and are not being treated as some kind of inconvenience.

As we said in study four we are a multi-cultural nation, but that does not mean we treat everyone the same, or presume that they are the same as us. Even though we have been united for hundreds of years, try telling a Scotsman he's English and see what response you'll get! In fact to say that somehow everyone is the same is actually to deny the fact that God has made us different. We might all bear his image, but we all have different facial features, and skin tones. We have been raised in different families with different customs and traditions.

Some people, though, say that they're 'colour-blind', and try to treat everybody the same. In truth what many of these people mean when they say this is that they do not recognise the genuine differences between individuals and cultures. As result they treat everyone according to their own personal customs and rules, and not necessarily do what is appropriate for the other person. For example, you will doubtless have realised from your discussion at the start of this study that it is wrong to presume that everybody celebrates Christmas in the same way, as every family can have its own traditions. This can inadvertently cause many difficulties when encountering people from a different ethnic or cultural group. It can even be interpreted as implying some kind of cultural superiority.

This was a mistake which some of the early missionaries made, when at times they confused the good news of the Gospel, with British culture. As a result they tried to impose their own cultural beliefs on other cultures, rather than respecting the customs of others. Thus, for example, an Indian converting from Hinduism to Christianity would be expected to eat beef before their baptism, and similarly a Muslim who converted would be expected to consume pork.¹² There was also an unwillingness to develop culturally appropriate patterns of worship, and witness. Such actions continue to cause offence in certain parts of the world, because again it is a denial that all of us are made in the image of God and are worthy of respect.

Questions

- 1 Can you think of any occasion when someone has caused offence to you because you were not treated as an individual? How did it make you feel?
- 2 Can you think of some examples of where people have been 'blind' to the customs of others?
- 3 In what ways can we confuse the Gospel and culture even in church? (eg is it

¹² The Revd Dr Herbert Hofer 'The Buden of the Past' www.missionfrontiers.org/2000/05/hofer.htm

necessary to sing to get to heaven?)

All the Same in Christ?

The point that Paul is making in the verses from Colossians is not that everyone is the same in Christ, but that everyone is equal in Christ. When people come to Christ they do not stop being English, or West Indian or Asian, but they become part of the body of Christ. A body, which as Paul points out in 1 Corinthians is very diverse with different gifts and skills. However, those gifts or skills are not confined to one ethnic group or another, just as they are not confined to one gender or another, but are distributed to all people according to the grace of God.

Question

4 Take a look at Acts 17:16 – 34, how was Paul culturally sensitive in his mission in Athens, and what lessons can we learn today?

Application

Think about how you could make your church more culturally-inclusive. Could your services and activities better reflect the diversity of cultures in your community?

Prayer

Father, we ask for forgiveness for those times we have been insensitive to the needs of others.

For those occasions when our insensitivity has produced offence.

Father, we are truly sorry, and we ask that you might help us both as individuals and as churches to be sensitive to others, particularly to those from different cultures. Help us Lord to use the gifts that you have given all your people for the work of the Kingdom

Help us too Lord to be inclusive of others, to learn from them, and in so doing to be able to celebrate our diversity, which gives us greater insight into your nature.

Amen

GROUP STUDY – 7

GROUP LEADER'S NOTES

We are called to be different seeking to live according to Christian values, and to be salt and light to the nations. We are called to be salt and light to the nations.

Bible Study: 'Different but Equal'
Colossians 3:10-11

Aim

The aim of this session is to recognise that while we are all equal in Christ we are not all the same, and that the customs of those from other backgrounds must be respected, if they are to feel included.

Introduction

This session follows on from the last in that it talks about some of the practicalities of building bridges with those from other cultures, and in particular how we need to respect the customs of others and not impose our customs on them. You can start the session by reading the Bible passage, and then spend a few moments in quiet reflection.

Group Exercise

Compare the ways in which different members of the group celebrate Christmas, what particular family customs does each member have, or did they celebrate when they were young?

Get them to think about all the customs we have adopted from other cultures, not just at Christmas, but all year round, some are obvious such as curries and pizzas, for example. Other traditions are less so, for example did you know that fried fish in batter were reportedly brought to Britain by a Jewish group fleeing persecution in Portugal in the sixteenth century, and that the first fish and chip shop was opened by a Jewish Immigrant from Eastern Europe

in London in 1860?¹³ How many of these adoptive customs have been a positive influence and how many a negative? The first part of the exercise is to make people realise that different people have different customs, and that there is nothing wrong with that. While the aim of the second part is to overcome some of the fears people have that if others bring in different customs to our culture, then somehow our sense of identity is lost. In truth many of our 'traditional' customs were actually brought in from elsewhere in the first place.

Blind, Sensitive or Inclusive?

This section is about respecting people as individuals, and not trying to pressure them into conforming to our customs and habits. We don't expect a Scotsman living in England to support the English football team, so why should we expect those from other countries to do so? We need to recognise that sometimes we apply a double standard. Even different families have their own customs, so why do we expect people to conform to some stereotype?

Here we also recognise that insensitivity has caused some problems in the past. In fact at times this has actually produced a barrier to the Gospel, because people have confused culture and religion.

Guidelines for Answering the Questions

- 1 It probably made them feel as if somehow they did not really matter.
- 2 Some years ago people talked about churches being seeker sensitive or seeker centred, we're using the same sort of language here. Being 'blind' to the customs of others is where individuals and churches have assumed there is only one way to do things, and have completely ignored the views or needs of those coming in from the outside. Being 'sensitive' at least recognises that others have different customs and patterns of

¹³ Jay Rayner 'Enduring Love', Guardian Unlimited
<http://observer.guardian.co.uk/foodmonthly/story/0,9950,877008,00.html>

behaviour, which should be respected and catered for, so that they feel welcomed. Being 'inclusive' means that you ensure that in fact their customs are included at the heart of whatever you are doing, so they feel on an equal footing.

- 3 No doubt this will produce an interesting discussion. Hopefully somebody will come up with the idea that it is not the way we worship, but the values we hold which matter.

All the Same in Christ?

This section reinforces the previous one, we might all be one in Christ, but we are not all the same, we all bring different gifts and skills to the work of the Kingdom, which are all needed.

Guidelines for Answering the Questions

- 4 Important points here: Paul took time to investigate the beliefs of others, he did not ridicule them, he did not put others down, instead he used something he discovered in their culture and built a positive message around it.

Application

Examples might be: Use of language and music, and imagery in our posters and banners. Do we provide translation? Are our leaflets in other languages, or use appropriate images? Does the preacher use illustrations from different cultural backgrounds? If you have puppets are they all white? There are many other examples.

Items required for this Session

Members' Notes

Bibles

GROUP STUDY – 8

PARTICIPANTS' NOTES

We believe that Jesus calls us to everybody, but particularly to protect those who are the poorest and most vulnerable in our society.

Bible Study: 'Justice for All'

Amos 5:18 - 27

Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But instead let justice roll like a river, righteousness like a never failing stream!

(Amos 5:23, 24)

Group Exercise

Justice in this World

It is a sad truth that the Christian Church of all denominations has not always been interested in the issue of justice, and that many have been mis-treated while the Church has stood silently by. Some have even taught that we should not be concerned about the physical needs of people in this world, but instead only to concern ourselves with spiritual matters. Happily, other Christians throughout the ages have recognised the need to stand against injustice in this world.

In 2004 a group of experts, chaired by the late Richard Whiteley, were asked to choose the greatest Yorkshire person in history from nominations sent in by the public. Their choice was perhaps surprising, but unanimous. It was William Wilberforce, the Christian campaigner against slavery. 2007 sees the bicentenary of the Act that abolished the slave trade, which Wilberforce had sponsored through Parliament. However, it was to be another thirty-one years before slavery itself was abolished in the British Empire.

What has not been well-known, though, is the role that a Baptist Minister, and a Baptist

local preacher, played in this story. William Knibb had arrived in Jamaica as minister of Falmouth Baptist Church in 1825, and became part of a group which became increasingly opposed to slavery. Sam Sharpe was a Jamaican slave, who became a local Baptist preacher, and travelled the island preaching to all who would listen. However, Sam Sharpe, also followed the progress of the anti-slavery campaign in Britain, and in 1831 organised a strike by slaves all over the island, which was viciously put down by the plantation owners. Sharpe was arrested and executed in May 1832. In the meantime, Knibb, who had also been arrested on suspicion of being involved with the strike, but subsequently released, returned to England in April 1832, and spoke out about what had happened. The result was a renewal of the abolition campaign, which resulted in the passing of the Abolition Act of 1833, with the final abolition of slavery taking place in 1838.

Questions

- 1 What does this story of Wilberforce, Sharpe and Knibb teach us of the need to stand up for justice?
- 2 Can one person make a difference today?
- 3 What place does the pursuit of justice have in the mission of the Church?

The Legacy of Slavery

Sadly although slavery in the British Empire was abolished in 1838, its effects are still being felt today. Many still feel resentful of the suffering of their forebears, and many of the most influential families in Britain made their money from the slave trade. Slavery itself is also still to be found in many parts of the world, even in Britain itself. The legacy lives on.

Of course slavery is not the only injustice that has occurred in our past that still has repercussions today. For instance the actions of Clive of India, especially in response to the infamous incident of the 'Black hole of Calcutta', still rankle with many on the Indian sub-continent.

Questions

- 4 How can we overcome the effects of this legacy?
- 5 What are some of the other injustices we need to stand up against in this world?

Celebrating Inclusion

Finally, let us celebrate when we see things changing for the better, and our churches and communities become more culturally inclusive. Let us remember stories like that of the Revd Peter Sandford, a former slave from America. He became the first black minister in England, when he became minister of the Baptist church in Hope Street, Birmingham, in 1889. Later he founded the Wilberforce Memorial Church in Sparkbrook. The tradition of Peter Sandford continued in Birmingham when in the 1960s it is reported that the Small Heath Baptist Church had an Afro-Caribbean minister, who ministered to the immigrant community coming into the city at that time. In the 1960s Michael Ramsey, then Archbishop of York looked forward to the day when there would be a black Archbishop of York, a wish fulfilled when John Sentamu was installed in November 2005.

Things are changing, injustices are being challenged, but there is still a need for the issues of the past to be recognised, and dealt with. However, there is also the need for forgiveness to be exercised, because bitterness and animosity are also against the Christian gospel. Injustices can be found in all cultures, and need to be opposed in all cases. There can be no 'no-go' areas for the truth. Our responsibility is to be inclusive communities welcoming people of all ethnic backgrounds and cultures, sharing with them the good news of Jesus, and building the Kingdom here on Earth.

Questions

- 6 What signs of hope do you see that our churches and communities can be culturally inclusive?
- 7 What have you learnt about being culturally inclusive through this course?

Prayer

Father we thank you for those who have stood against injustice in the past for people like William Wilberforce, William Knibb and Sam Sharpe.

We thank you too for those who had the courage to recognise the giftings of Peter Sandford and called him to ministry in Birmingham.

Help us to be equally bold in standing up for the rights of others, to seek to bring Justice to this world.

Father we thank you too for all that you have shown us through this course.

May we learn the lessons you have shown us, and try to put them into action in our lives both as individuals and as a church.

Lord help us to live culturally inclusive lives, and be concerned to build bridges with those of other cultures. Amen.

GROUP STUDY – 8

GROUP LEADER'S NOTES

We believe that Jesus calls us to everybody, but particularly to protect those who are the poorest and most vulnerable in our society.

Bible Study: 'Justice for All'

Amos 5:18 – 27

Aim

The aim of this session is help people realise that as Christians we need to be concerned about issues of justice, including recognising the consequences of past injustices.

Introduction

In this session we are going to look at why as Christians we should be concerned about the issue of justice, we are going to look at it from both a biblical perspective, and also as part of our tradition.

Group Exercise

Get a bible concordance, or computer search programme, and get the group to look at as many references to the word justice (there are about 130 in the NIV text) that they can find in the bible in ten minutes. (You will need to split them up in some way).

Compare the contexts in which these references occur?

Does the group think that justice is important to God?

Has it always been important in the Church?

Hopefully the group will realise that the issue of Justice is very important to God as witnessed by our text from Amos, which it would be appropriate to reflect on at this point.

Justice in this World

This section reminds us of the role Christians played in the abolition of slavery. In particular it points out that it was a combination of both national and local efforts which in the end made a difference

Guidelines for Answering the Questions

- 1 Hopefully people will recognise our responsibility as Christians to stand against injustice.
- 2 Yes they can, and many movements can be traced back to one person's idea even today.
- 3 It should have a high place on our agenda, and if people see we are genuinely concerned they are more willing to take us seriously.

The Legacy of Slavery

However, we must realise that the faults of the past have had consequences, which cannot be ignored. Some people wonder whether we need to say sorry for things that happened hundreds of years ago. However, if they were done in the name of the Church and Christianity then we need to recognise that the consequences have to be dealt with by those who are in the Church today.

Guidelines for Answering the Questions

- 4 We can take responsibility by admitting the validity of the complaint, and acknowledging the Church's role in standing by and allowing injustice to happen without intervening.
- 5 Examples could be: the sex-trade in Asia and elsewhere, children being made to work in sweatshops, the slave trade which still goes on, persecution of different cultures, treatment of asylum seekers etc, etc.

Celebrating Inclusion

This section is a deliberate celebration of what has been positive in our churches on the subject of being culturally inclusive, and an acknowledgement that things are improving, although we could always do better.

Guidelines for Answering the Questions

Things are changing for the better and there are many examples to back this up, although it is important not to be complacent.

This should provide an opportunity to reflect

over the course as a whole, and hopefully for individuals to share what God has been speaking to them about.

Items required for this Session

Members' Notes

Bibles

Concordances or Bible Search Programmes

And Finally

Finally we would like to take this opportunity to thank you for all your hard work in leading the group during these sessions. We really hope you have been blessed by it, and that you have found God to be at work in the sessions. Thank you again.

Section Three

SERMON OUTLINES

Introduction to the Sermon Outlines

The following sermon outlines are offered as frameworks for use in Sunday services, or wherever a church may feel is appropriate. They are not directly linked to the Bible Studies, other than being exploration of the issues surrounding the eight core statements of this manifesto. It is therefore up to each individual church and preacher as to how they wish to make use of the material outlined.

It is though important that they are used as a basis for preparation, rather than simply a 'short-cut'. Every congregation's situation is unique, and will need to be adapted to. There needs to be room too for the Holy Spirit to speak through the passages, and into the lives of those listening. Some churches will wish to have a more exegetical approach, others more visual with multi-media, and so on. Preachers will also wish to use their own illustrations, and indeed this is to be encouraged provided they are appropriate. All that we would ask is that the main 'flow' of each of the sermon outlines is used.

In addition we are also hoping to develop some worship resources to go with these sermon outlines, and for further information on these please contact Baptist House.

SERMON OUTLINE – 1

All people are created in God's image in whose eyes we are all equal

Sermon Title: 'Created Equal'

Revelation 7:9

After this I looked and there before me was a great crowd that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.

Aim

To help people see that we are all equal before God, and that learning about other cultures can be an enriching experience

1 Diversity: Part of God's Creation

Whilst God created only one human race he did not create human beings alike.

He created male and female.

He creates each person individually.

But each human being carries the image of God.

2 Diversity does not support racism

Enmity between ethnic groups was not part of God's plan.

The passage in Revelation shows that people of all ethnicities can be equal members of the Kingdom.

This is a fulfilment of God's plan as foreseen through scripture:

God's house to be a house for all nations (Isaiah 56:7)

Jesus' own prophecy (Luke 13:29)

The coming of the Spirit (Acts 2:5 -11)

Therefore, Christians have a responsibility to stand against racism.

3 Diversity Enriches

Because each person carries the image of God, getting to know other people of different cultures increases our knowledge about God.

Different cultures can enrich our worship.

Working and worshipping together is a testimony to the world.

How far do our churches reflect the diversity in our communities?

What can we do to become a culturally inclusive community?

SERMON OUTLINE – 2

God's great blessings need to be distributed equally to all people regardless of ethnic-origin or culture

Sermon Title: 'Fair Shares for All?'

Matthew 20:1 – 16

.. so the last will be first, and the first will be last"

Aim

To show that we have not earned God's blessing, and so we have a responsibility to stand against inequality in society.

1 A Fair Day's Pay?

The men were in the market-place to look for work.

Even today in many countries labourers gather at certain points and employers come to hire them.

The group in the passage might well have included migrant workers.

If they didn't get work they, and their families, went hungry.

The first group were offered a fair day's wage

Were they right to grumble at the end of the day?

2 Unearned Generosity

The landowner is generous. Why? We don't really know.

Maybe there was a concern that all should be blessed.

But Jesus said this was what the Kingdom is like.

In the Kingdom everyone is equally blessed by God.

But is everyone equally blessed in our world?

3 Bias to the Poor

Throughout his ministry Jesus had a concern for the outcast, the despised and marginalised.

He had come to bring 'good news to the poor'

Who are the poor in our society?

Is our generosity sometimes limited by our prejudices?

How can we walk in the footsteps of Jesus?

SERMON OUTLINE – 3

It is our duty and joy to welcome strangers, travellers, settlers and their families of all cultures into our community

Sermon Title: 'Strangers or Friends?'

Genesis 18: 1 – 15

Abraham looked up and saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he hurried from the entrance to His tent to meet them and bowed low to the ground

Aim

To recognise that throughout the bible God commands us to welcome strangers, and offer hospitality to those in need.

1 Offering Hospitality

Those who travel in the Third world often comment on the generosity of those they meet, even those who have very little.

In the OT and NT there is the command to show hospitality.

Abraham on many occasions showed hospitality.

Here he offers hospitality to the three total strangers

He was generous and gave even of the best of his herd.

He gave them the best with no hint of reward.

But as a result he received a blessing.

2 A Welcoming Nation?

How are we at welcoming strangers in this nation?

Read the newspapers and you'd think we were being over-run with people from other nations

In fact the overwhelming majority of the world's refugees and asylum seekers are to be found in the poorest countries.

These countries share their meagre resources with those in need.

What does that say about us as a nation?

Do people starve here because we've welcomed refugees?

Yes there are bogus claimants, but what is worse to let a few bogus claimants through, or for anyone with genuine need be turned away?

3 Time to Rethink

We have to be concerned if people who have fled from torture and violence feel they have not received a warm welcome in this nation.

If we, who have so much material blessing, are not willing to share it with those in genuine need what does it say about us?

Can we say that as a nation we are demonstrating Christian values?

What does it say about our nation as well, that some people who have lived here for generations still don't feel welcomed?

Abraham received the promise of a son as a result of his welcome.

What chance do we have of God continuing to bless this nation?

SERMON OUTLINE – 4

We can receive God's special blessing as we offer a true welcome, a home, material needs and care to all people.

Sermon Title: 'Little Things can bring Blessing'

Matthew 25:40

I tell you the truth, whatever you did for the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did to me

Aim

To help people recognise the part they can play in welcoming others, and also see that in so doing we are obeying the command of Christ.

1 Little things can make a Big Difference

Think of an occasion in your life when a little thing has made a big difference it might have been a card, a phone call, a hand on the shoulder.

Little things can change people's lives.

Little things can have an eternal implication as this passage tells us (link to previous sermon)

Did the people get into the Kingdom based on how many times they went to church, or on how much they put the gospel message into action?

2 Faith and Action Belong Together

The cross is God's love in action

Our mission is to share that love with others

To share what God has done for us

To speak out in defence of the weak and oppressed

But we must share God's love with more than words (James 2).

Faith and action must be combined.

3 Welcoming Strangers

Following on from last time how can we make people welcome?

By little things, a handshake, a card, a visit, coffee invitations etc.

By showing genuine love and concern.

We can change people's lives.

We can help make a better world, by touching the lives of individuals

Because even little things can make a big difference

SERMON OUTLINE – 5

Every person is our neighbour regardless of ethnic-origin or culture, and is fully deserving of our unconditional love just as Christ commanded.

Sermon Title: 'Showing Real Love'

Luke 10:25 - 37

He answered: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind", and "Love your neighbour as yourself".

Aim

To help people see our responsibility to show God's love to others, even when doing so is risky, and the consequences when we withhold our love.

1 Loving our Neighbour

In answering the question 'Who is my neighbour?' Jesus told his listeners, what is now a familiar story, which not only spoke of the need to overcome prejudice, but that true love was shown in action.

The question is "Who is our neighbour today, and do they know it?"

2 When We Get It Wrong

Not showing love has consequences

The priest and the Levite do not come out well from the story

Have there been times when we have acted like them either as individuals, or as churches, or as a nation?

Have there even been times when we have not shown love for our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ?

3 The Need for Wisdom

Of course there is a need for wisdom

There are those who would take advantage of us

Sometimes we need to say no

But what is worse to accidentally give to those who don't deserve it, or to ignore those in real need because we think we might be swindled?

4 When We Get It Right

Ever wondered what the man who was robbed thought when he discovered what the Samaritan had done for him?

When churches and Christians get a reputation for showing real love amazing things start to happen.

Barriers are broken, people see the Church as relevant, and the Kingdom grows.

The words of John 'Let us not love with words or tongue, but with actions and in truth' (1 John 3:18)

SERMON OUTLINE– 6

We should not be judgemental of anyone based on their appearance, ethnicity, culture and background, but to treat people as individuals created and loved by God.

Sermon Title: 'Breaking Barriers'

Acts 10:1 - 48

I now realise how true it is that God does not show favouritism

Aim

To recognise our responsibility to overcome prejudice and stereotyping, and to overcome the fear that so often divides people from one another.

1 God's Purpose For All Humanity

When William Carey promoted the idea of a mission to other nations his greatest opposition came from his fellow ministers.

"If God wants to convert the heathen he could do it without the help of men" They argued.

What would have happened in Carey had followed their advice?

What would have happened if Peter had not obeyed God in this story?

Christianity would have been a sect of Judaism.

However Peter was deeply rooted in the Jewish tradition of his time.

This had to be overcome.

2 Peter's Prejudice

Peter had travelled with Jesus for three years.

Jesus the one who repeatedly broke barriers, with the sick, 'sinners', Samaritans, Gentiles

Yet still Peter's prejudice ran deep, so God had to show him a new way - the purpose of the vision

Peter's attitude changed – even entering the house of a Gentile made him unclean.

He recognised God's love for all regardless of ethnic origin, and that all are equal before him.

He also witnessed a demonstration of God's grace through the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, which convinced him the gospel was even for the Gentiles.

3 Breaking Barriers

The first step to breaking a barrier is to realise that one exists in the first place.

To be honest with ourselves, and recognise our prejudices.

Do we consciously or unconsciously judge others because of their appearance or background?

Do we welcome those who are different, or avoid them?

Prejudice is born out of fear. It is the fear that has to be overcome.

Peter's prejudice was overcome when he met Cornelius and got to know him.

Our prejudices can be overcome when we meet with others and get to know them.

We live in a divided country, where a teenager is killed because of the colour of his skin, isn't it time we started to break down some of the barriers that divide us?

SERMON OUTLINE – 7

We are called to be different seeking to live according to Christian values, and to be salt and light to the nations. We are called to be salt and light to the nations.

Sermon Title: 'Not Running with the World'

Romans 12: 1 - 8

Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind

Aim

To help people see that if we want to be an influence in the world, we have to live by Christian values.

1 The Pressure to Conform

We talk about youngsters and peer pressure, but we are under pressure to conform. Advertising is all about applying the pressure to make us conform.

For thousands of years civilization survived without the mobile phone, but now you're treated as strange if you don't have one.

There is the pressure to look good, to have a great house, or a fantastic car.

These are all pressures we have to cope with.

However, we are urged to conform in our attitudes as well, to think the same as everyone else.

2 Christian Values

However, as Christians we are called to live by a different set of values - values which sometimes run counter to the way the world thinks.

The Baptist Union produced a booklet called *Five Core Values* a few years back.

The values listed were that Baptist churches should be: A Worshipping Community, A Missionary Community, A Sacrificial Community, A Prophetic Community, and An Inclusive Community.

How far do we live up to these values?

In particular in this context how far are we truly inclusive communities?

Are we noticeably different from the world around?

If we are not inclusive then we cannot be prophetic, or missionary, we cannot be salt and light if we cannot demonstrate the visible love of God in our community.

3 Flattered into Deception

Ask any church, and they will claim to be friendly and inclusive.

Ask their visitors and you could well get a different story.

Easy to be friendly to people like you, it's harder with those who are different

How easy is it for anyone to become part of our community?

How easy is it for those who are different, particularly those of another ethnic group?

4 Inclusive Community

An inclusive community is where people are not just tolerated, but welcomed.

Where they feel they stand on an equal footing with everyone else.

Where their gifts can be used, and their abilities recognised.
Where there are no cliques, no exclusion of others because they are different.
Where the love of God flows free.
Such communities are a beacon to the world of what true Christian living is.
Not living by the standards of the world, but by the values of the Kingdom.

SERMON OUTLINE – 8

We believe that Jesus calls us to everybody, but particularly to protect those who are the poorest and most vulnerable in our society.

Sermon Title: 'A Just Society'

Exodus 23:9

Do not oppress an alien; you yourselves know how it feels to be aliens, because you were aliens in Egypt.

Aim

To help people recognise that we are called to be a prophetic people standing against injustice in every way we can.

1 A Just Nation?

A theme throughout the bible is God's call for his people to act with justice. The prophet Amos speaking to the people of Israel in a time of huge economic prosperity tells them that they will suffer God's judgement because of their lack of concern for justice. ...Is that true of us?
Why is it that someone who is black in this country is more likely to be poor, or in prison, or in a mental hospital than a white person?
Could it be that even in Britain in the 21st century the colour of your skin makes a difference to the way you are treated?
Are those who come to this country also treated differently?

2 A Just World?

And if this is the case of the UK in the 21st century, what about the rest of the world? In too many nations there is injustice.
Too many nations seek to oppress one culture and promote another.
How many situations can we think of in the world where the oppression of one ethnic group has led to violence and warfare?
The history of the world tells us that those regimes that seek to oppress eventually fall, but there is much suffering on the way.

3 A Hope For Justice

However, there is another way. The Israelites were told by God that even though they had been oppressed they should not oppress others. .. Jesus told Peter that he should always forgive others. Can this work?
Many believed that the apartheid regime of South Africa would not fall without bloodshed, and that there could well be civil war. However it did not happen, why? Because Nelson Mandela recognised that if South Africa was to have a future it must be a future for all. However, he also realised that the crimes of the past needed to be recognised, and so established the truth and justice commission, not to administer punishment, but to obtain the truth, and open the door to reconciliation.
If it could work in South Africa, why not the rest of the world?

4 Our Responsibility

Our duty is clear from the bible to seek justice for all.

For our churches to be inclusive communities, and to ensure that our nation is an inclusive community.

For only then will we truly be listened to, until then people can point to our injustices, and use them to excuse their own.

However, if we do manage to become fully culturally inclusive, and just, communities, then maybe we can change the world for the better, and bring Kingdom values to this world ready for the next.

Section Four

MAKING IT REAL

How Your Church can be part of Building a Culturally Inclusive Community

A central aim of this project is to see churches and Christian organisations begin to address the issues around building a culturally inclusive community. However, we do not want this to simply be a theoretical exercise. We want churches to look at what actions they can take to become culturally inclusive communities, and also to influence the wider world around them.

Sadly in our society there are those who would seek to divide society on the grounds of 'race'. They want to stir up suspicion and hatred against those who have different cultural backgrounds. Some even claim to do so because of 'Christian' principles. It is important that we stand up and say what true Christian principles are, and are seen to put those principles into practice. To set an example to the wider community of how different cultures can come together for the benefit of all.

We urge that every church conducts a review in order to take a careful look at itself, and its practices, to identify where there are issues it might need to work on. To help you in this we have devised a questionnaire, which is included as Appendix A to this booklet. Having identified the issues we would then urge churches to draw up an action plan, and a sample of what such a plan might look like is included in Appendix B.

Hopefully, by conducting the review and devising the action plan, churches will become conscious of the things that might need to be corrected within their own organisation. However, it is important as well that churches witness to their commitment to being culturally-inclusive to the wider community, and so we would hope churches would take the time to devise a 'Culturally Inclusive Community Policy', a sample of which is included in Appendix C. This can be displayed in the church, but also could be publicised in the community, eg a public signing ceremony, or through a press release.

We recognise as well that it looking at themselves some churches might become conscious of people within their own congregations who have inappropriate attitudes, and are both intolerant and disrespectful of those from other cultures. We have therefore drawn up a code of practice (Appendix D), which churches can adopt in order to deal with such situations.

All this may seem over-bureaucratic, or simply being 'politically-correct'. However, it is important to take time to think about these issues, and so avoid the mistakes of the past. You might also like to put a copy of your 'Culturally Inclusive Community Policy' up in your church, and Appendix E has a sample sign you might like to put up as well to indicate that you are taking this issue seriously.

However, most of all we want churches to take positive action to demonstrate their commitment to being culturally inclusive. For example why not organise some events to celebrate the diversity of cultures in your community, such as food festival, or arts and crafts show, or a cultural evening? Another suggestion is to organise a multi-cultural service in partnership with other churches, with different participants.

Do not, though, make these things simply 'one-offs', but think how you can include those of other cultures in your activities on a regular basis. That is what being truly culturally-inclusive is all about.

Conclusion

We hope that through this manifesto we have taken you on a journey, where you have been encouraged to think about issues which have perhaps not occurred to you before. Maybe at times you have found some of the things discussed challenging, and even have had you on your knees in prayer. As a church, perhaps, you have felt the need to work through these issues, and even confront inappropriate attitudes and behaviour in your midst. Having looked at this manifesto, maybe too you have decided to reach out the hand of friendship to those from a different cultural background.

The bible reminds us time and again that we are to offer hospitality to those who need it, and to welcome the stranger among us. Our hope is that as you seek to build a culturally inclusive community in your church and beyond, you will be richly blessed by God, and that those who come to you from other parts of the world will find a warm welcome in your community.

APPENDIX A:

A CULTURAL AWARENESS REVIEW FOR CHURCHES

1 What is the ethnic make-up of your church's congregation?

(Fill in below with the rough percentages of each ethnic group which forms part of your congregation)

White British	<input type="text"/>	White Irish	<input type="text"/>	White European	<input type="text"/>
Indian	<input type="text"/>	Pakistani	<input type="text"/>	Bangladeshi	<input type="text"/>
Black Caribbean	<input type="text"/>	Black African	<input type="text"/>	Black Other	<input type="text"/>
Mixed Race	<input type="text"/>	Chinese	<input type="text"/>	Other	<input type="text"/>
				Please State	

2 What is the ethnic make-up of the community around your church?

(For information on this go to <http://neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/> on the internet)

White British	<input type="text"/>	White Irish	<input type="text"/>	White European	<input type="text"/>
Indian	<input type="text"/>	Pakistani	<input type="text"/>	Bangladeshi	<input type="text"/>
Black Caribbean	<input type="text"/>	Black African	<input type="text"/>	Black Other	<input type="text"/>
Mixed Race	<input type="text"/>	Chinese	<input type="text"/>	Other	<input type="text"/>
				Please State	

3 How far does your church congregation reflect the cultural make-up of its surrounding community?

Very well	<input type="text"/>	To some extent	<input type="text"/>	Not at all	<input type="text"/>
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4 How far do the leaders and helpers in your church groups reflect the ethnic make-up of the local community?

Very well	<input type="text"/>	To some extent	<input type="text"/>	Not at all	<input type="text"/>
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5 How well does the leadership of the church reflect the ethnic make-up of the local community?

Very well	<input type="text"/>	To some extent	<input type="text"/>	Not at all	<input type="text"/>
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6 How often do your church services include items culturally relevant to your community?

Frequently Sometimes Hardly Ever

7 Do your posters, pictures and materials which you use in services reflect the cultural diversity of our communities?

Yes No

8 Do your church groups ensure their activities are culturally relevant?

Yes Sometimes Not at all

9 Does your church publicity take into account the different cultures in your community?

Yes Sometimes Not at all

10 When you serve food are there culturally appropriate foods available?

Yes Sometimes Not at all

11 Has your church undertaken cultural awareness training?

Yes No

12 Has your church undertaken a spiritual gifts awareness course?

Yes No

13 Does your church have links with a church where the majority of the congregation are from another culture?

Yes No

14 Does your church have links with minority ethnic groups in your community?

Yes No

15 Has the church ever had Biblical teaching about racism and cultural awareness?

Yes No

APPENDIX B:

DEVELOPING AN ACTION PLAN

On the following pages we have set out a sample action plan for churches to look at, adapt and hopefully adopt for themselves. We would ask that the church to set time aside time in their leadership/deacons/elders meetings in order to consider the issues it raises. Churches are permitted to photocopy these pages for their leadership team.

In drawing up this sample action plan we have sought to be as thorough as possible. However, we recognise that not churches will require such a detailed plan. Therefore, churches are free to adapt this plan as appropriate to their own situation, although we would ask that any plan a church draws up should seek to address the core principles of this manifesto.

If a church feels that it would appreciate some help in addressing these issues then your Regional Association should be able to offer assistance.

Issues	Key Questions	Action Plan	Target Date	Completed
<p>1 Adopting the Manifesto</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The church agrees to adopt the manifesto. » The church commits itself to operate its life on inclusive Christian values, including the nurturing, protecting, welcoming and safeguarding of all. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Do we have any rules, policies, practices or procedures which run counter to the manifesto? » How can we ensure that we continue to operate according to the manifesto's principles, and that we are being effective at being culturally inclusive? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The church needs to review all existing rules, policies, practices and procedures in the light of the manifesto, to ensure no indication of discrimination exists. » The church appoints a co-ordinator to monitor, promote and advise the church on all matters relating to ethnic and cultural inclusivity (see point 9). » The church agrees that the Leadership will annually review and monitor the effectiveness of the manifesto. 		
<p>2 Welcoming and Supporting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The church recognises that the welcoming and supporting of all people is the responsibility of the whole church. » To ensure that a welcome is offered to all in ways that are culturally appropriate. » It is recognised that friends from all cultures are a valuable part of the Church and have as much to give as well as to receive. » The church commits itself to listening to each other, to involve all people in every level of the church's life and celebrate their presence. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » How well does our congregation and membership reflect the community we seek to serve? » Do we allow those from other cultures to actively participate in the life of church activities? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Arrange for training for key people (eg deacons, door stewards, children's and youth workers) on cultural awareness » Ensure a positive invitation is offered to Christians from other cultures to become church members. » Run a gifts awareness course (eg Willow Creek's Network) in order to ascertain the giftings of all those in the church and seek to use them as appropriately as possible. 		

Issues	Key Questions	Action Plan	Target Date	Completed
<p>3 Relationships with the Local Community</p> <p>» The church commits itself to developing relationships with all ethnic groups of the local community</p>	<p>» Are we truly culturally inclusive in our dealings with the local community?</p> <p>» How well do we communicate with all members of the local community?</p>	<p>» The church needs to develop a culturally inclusive community policy (see Appendix C)</p> <p>» The church needs to identify and contact local minority ethnic communities.</p> <p>» To build links with key local people (eg councillors, MPs, community workers, voluntary groups, police) to discuss 'racial' issues in their area.</p> <p>» To arrange events and activities, where the church can meet members of the community on an equal footing.</p>		
<p>4 Building links with Christians of other cultures</p> <p>» The church commits itself to building links with Christians and churches of other cultures both at home and abroad.</p>	<p>» Have our members had the opportunity to meet with Christians of other cultures, and experience different forms of worship?</p>	<p>» Develop links with churches from other cultures, both at home and abroad, arranging for the exchange of news for information and prayer. Arranging visits, and engaging in joint practical activities.</p>		

Issues	Key Questions	Action Plan	Target Date	Completed
<p>5 The Church's Mission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The church commits itself to engage in mission activities that are culturally appropriate for the communities they serve. » The church will offer and promote activities and events within the church which are culturally appropriate to those attending. » The church commits itself to endeavouring to ensure that all means of communication with those in the church and community, including literature, websites and advertising, are culturally appropriate, and in a language easily understood by those receiving it. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » How can we ascertain what is culturally appropriate for those we are seeking to reach? » How can we understand the needs of those coming into our areas? Do we need to provide translation in our services? » Are the timings of events appropriate? » Are we aware of the needs of children as well as older folk? » How do we identify any other cultural requirements eg in food preparation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Cultural awareness training (see point 2) » Through the Association or Union seek advice from those with specialist knowledge and language training. 		
<p>6 Leadership in the Church</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The church commits itself to the principle that ethnic background should not be a barrier to leadership in the church, but recognises that sometimes those from other ethnic backgrounds have not had the opportunity to develop leadership skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Do we allow those from other cultures to participate in the leadership of the church? » Do we ensure that when recruiting staff, and appointing church officers (eg ministers, deacons etc) that those of all ethnic backgrounds are treated equally? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Encourage those from different ethnic backgrounds to go on leadership training courses » Review all recruitment and selection procedures to ensure there is no indirect discrimination. 		

Issues	Key Questions	Action Plan	Target Date	Completed
<p>7 Good Practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The church recognises it is the responsibility of all members to create a secure and positive environment, free from racist language and behaviour. » We declare that prejudice and racism is sin, and where this leads to the exclusion of others it is to be confronted and dealt with. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Does every church member understand and agree upon what is appropriate language and behaviour for people to engage in? » Has there been teaching as to what constitutes racism? » Does the church have an understanding the difference between cultural and religious behaviour? » Do the pictures on our walls and all the props we use in our services and activities reflect the cultural diversity in our society? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Arrange for cultural awareness training (see point 2) » Develop a policy for dealing with racism in the church (see Appendix D) » Conduct an audit of all the church's premises, organisations, services etc. to ensure that cultural diversity is represented in every aspect of the church's life. 		
<p>8 The Responsibility of Members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » It is expected that every member of the church will welcome, confirm and accept this manifesto, and seek to live according to the Biblical Principles that have been set out in the eight statements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » How can we be sure that all members accept the principles of this manifesto? » How can we ensure that new members are aware of its requirements? » What happens if there is an incident or complaint about inappropriate attitudes or actions? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » That regular opportunities will be given within the teaching programme of the church for these principles to be re-affirmed. » That acceptance of this manifesto should be written into the requirements for membership » That a procedure is developed to deal with any situations where these principles are violated. 		

Issues	Key Questions	Action Plan	Target Date	Completed
<p>9 The Co-ordinator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The church seeks to fulfil its commitment to appoint a co-ordinator to oversee the implementation of this manifesto. » 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » What would be the appropriate qualifications for such an appointment? » Are we clear of what is expected of them? » How can we help them with training and other support? » How can we ensure that their recommendations are listened to by the church? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » See Appendix F for an appropriate 'job description' and person specification for such a role. » Seek guidance on appropriate training from your Regional Association or BUGB. Ensure that there is an amount set aside in the church budget for the implementation of this manifesto. » Ensure that the co-ordinator makes regular reports to the leadership and church meetings. 		
<p>10 A Prophetic Voice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » The church commits itself to being a prophetic voice in this community about the need to be culturally inclusive. » 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » How can we be salt and light in this community about being culturally inclusive? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Ensure people are aware of our manifesto and action plan, and that they can see it making a difference in the life of the church. 		

APPENDIX C

A CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY POLICY

For

..... Church

- 1 As followers of Jesus Christ we acknowledge His uniqueness as the revelation of God in the world, and we seek to emulate His life and teachings.
- 2 We believe that all people are created in God's image in whose eyes we are all equal.
- 3 We recognise, however, that in the past Christians have discriminated against those of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, which is a denial of the values we proclaim.
- 4 We believe that part of our responsibility as Christians is to ensure that everyone can equally share in God's blessings regardless of ethnic background or culture. Therefore, we commit ourselves to stand up against economic and social injustices wherever they may be found.
- 5 We see in Jesus someone who accepted and respected those of different ethnic or cultural backgrounds, enabling them to experience the love of God, and recognise our responsibility to do the same. We therefore offer a warm welcome to all from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds to this church and its activities.
- 6 We recognise too that Jesus never judged by appearances, and so we commit ourselves to treating those who come to this church as individuals, worthy of our love and respect.
- 7 We commit ourselves to being sensitive to the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of those in this community, and to respecting the beliefs of others, asking that they will respect our beliefs in return.
- 8 In all our activities we will seek to include culturally relevant materials and modes of communication.
- 9 We also recognise our responsibility in the wider community to stand against those who would divide others on ethnic or cultural lines, and to seek to build bridges of peace and reconciliation.
- 10 We commit ourselves to seeking the transformation of this community into one that is truly multicultural.

Signed on behalf of Church

..... Date

APPENDIX D

A Specimen Policy for Dealing with those who display Inappropriate Attitudes and Behaviour, especially in Regard to Racism, in our Churches

Preamble

This policy has been drawn up in line with the biblical principles set out in Matthew 18:15 -17; Ephesians 3:1-17; and Galatians 6:1. The aim is to help churches deal with those who display inappropriate attitudes and behaviour, especially in regard to 'racism', particularly when those concerned do not respond to gentle correction. It, however, seeks to discriminate between the inadvertent comment, and repeated behaviour indicative of entrenched attitudes, to hear the heart of the person involved. This guidance seeks to bring about reconciliation on these issues, rather than being a mechanism for levying sanctions.

- 1 It is the responsibility of all to lovingly seek to correct those who display inappropriate attitudes and behaviour, especially in regard to remarks and actions that might be considered 'racist'.
- 2 If the person responsible has simply made an unthinking one-off comment then a gentle loving correction might be all that is appropriate.
- 3 However, if the actions are repeated, or if the person does not accept the correction, then the matter should be referred to the church leaders for consideration. The leaders should always treat such matters seriously, and hear all sides of the story. As a result of these discussions the leadership should then decide whether it is appropriate to let the matter rest there, or to take further steps. This may involve bringing in an outside person, or persons, to arbitrate.
- 4 If there is still no improvement in the situation then the matter may be referred to the church meeting for consideration of such action as may seem appropriate (this may, in extreme circumstances, include the possible suspension or termination of the person's membership).
- 5 If at any time the person whose behaviour has been complained about feels they have been mis-represented or dealt with inappropriately, then they have the right to ask for a mutually agreed outside person to be brought in to hear all sides of the argument, and report as to whether the person has been treated unjustly.
- 6 It is to be emphasised that all the steps of this procedure should be dealt with in the strictest confidence, and any information given only on a 'need to know basis'.

APPENDIX E

SIGN FOR DISPLAY ON CHURCH PREMISES

On the next page is a sample sign that can be displayed in your church to demonstrate that you are taking the issue of cultural inclusion seriously.



Seeking to be a culturally inclusive community

APPENDIX F

JOB DESCRIPTION FOR ACTION PLAN CO-ORDINATOR

Preamble

Having studied the booklet 'Embracing the World' we recognise that as a church we need to seek to become culturally inclusive. Therefore, we are adopting an action plan to try and address some of the issues we have identified within the church, and are looking for a co-ordinator to oversee the implementation of this plan.

Knowledge and Abilities

The person appointed will need to have knowledge of some of the key issues of cultural inclusion. They will also require the ability to implement the action plan in a manner that is appropriate to our Christian principles, and to be able to communicate the reasons for any changes clearly and appropriately. In addition they need to be approachable and diplomatic as situations arise which need to be dealt with

The Key Roles will be as follows:

- 1 To lead the church in developing and implementing its culturally inclusive action plan according to the principles set out in 'Embracing the World'.
- 2 To seek to ensure that the church provides a warm welcome and supporting relationships to people of all cultures.
- 3 To help build relationships with the local community especially with any ethnic communities.
- 4 To encourage the church in developing links with Christians of other cultures.
- 5 To help ensure that the church uses culturally appropriate methods and materials in its mission.
- 6 To help identify the spiritual gifts among the congregation and to encourage their use for the work of the kingdom, making particularly sure that those from different cultures have the opportunity to develop and use their gifts.
- 7 To help identify and encourage those from different cultures in the church with leadership gifts.
- 8 To help train church members in the use of culturally appropriate language, and also to help develop greater understanding on why these issues are important.
- 9 To help the church speak out where necessary on issues of cultural inclusion.

Accountability:

The co-ordinator will be accountable to the minister and church deacons in the first instance.

APPENDIX G

EVALUATION FORM

1 Did your church/group find this manifesto useful?

Very Mostly Not Really Not at all

2 Were the eight principles helpful?

Very Mostly Not Really Not at all

3 Were there any of the principles with which your church/group disagree, if so which one?

.....

4 Did your church/group find the group studies?

Very Good Good Alright Poor

5 Please rate the individual studies on a scale of 1 to 5.

Study One
Poor 1 2 3 4 5 Excellent

Study Two
Poor 1 2 3 4 5 Excellent

Study Three
Poor 1 2 3 4 5 Excellent

Study Four
Poor 1 2 3 4 5 Excellent

Study Five
Poor 1 2 3 4 5 Excellent

Study Six
Poor 1 2 3 4 5 Excellent

Study Seven
Poor 1 2 3 4 5 Excellent

Study Eight
Poor 1 2 3 4 5 Excellent

6 If your church used the sermon outlines did you find them?

Very Good Good Alright Poor

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