

## **The Need for a Racial Justice Sunday**

The year 2020 saw significant social upheavals which occurred at the same time as the international COVID-19 pandemic. There were Black Lives Matter protests and rallies across the world, a rise in expressions of anti-Asian racism, and the reminder of the graves belonging to Indigenous children who attended Indian Residential Schools across Canada and the continued detrimental impacts of systemic racism.

It has been over 3 years since the turbulent and traumatic time period when North Americans were asked to actively recognize, acknowledge, and make changes towards racial justice. Having a Racial Justice Sunday is a way for the Church to take the time to honour, respect, and continue working towards a commitment to racial justice within the Anglican church.

Racial Justice Sunday is one way the Anglican church (Edmonton Diocese) can publicly express Christ's call for us as Christians to love, care, and serve each other without creating barriers by colour, ethnicity, culture, and colonialism.

## **History of Racial Justice Sunday**

Racial Justice Sunday is an ecumenical observance which began in 1995 in Britain and Ireland. The catalyst for this observation was the murder of Stephen Lawrence, a Black teenager in South London, on 22 April 1993." CoE

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

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

“The gospel calls all Christians continually to confront the idolatry of racism and the evils in our world and to proclaim justice and mercy as we seek to walk with our God (Micah 6:8). Our worship unites us to Christ, transforms us in Word and Sacrament, and sends us out into the world to uphold the dignity of all in Christ.

Racism and racial discrimination are issues of justice because they deny basic human dignity to men and women made in God’s image. Wherever and whenever we treat another “as lesser, or other, our theology fails to celebrate the dramatic nature of our transformation as people who find their primary identity in Christ. In Christ, our differences are not simply erased but rather embraced, valuing the unique ways we each reflect the image of God”.” CoE

**Date:** Sunday February 11, 2024

**Where:** Within your parish during the service

To be held on the 2nd Sunday of February every year with events throughout the month.

**Liturgical resources for parishes:**

“These resources are designed for [optional] use on Racial Justice Sunday during your [service].

**Collect for Racial Justice Sunday**

“Compassionate God,  
who sent Jesus Christ  
to deliver us from all manner of injustices and inequalities,  
create in us new hearts and enlarged visions,  
to see the image of God in every person  
irrespective of background, race and ethnicity.  
May we be generous in our love of others  
as we work towards ending misunderstanding, racism and injustice;  
creating communities of human flourishing,  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord,  
who is alive and reigns with you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and forever.

**Amen.”**

(Source: Liturgical Resources for Black History Month CoE, 2024 Racial Justice Commission)

“Collect for Racial Justice Sunday Merciful God, you are righteous and love justice: stir the hearts of your people that, rejoicing in our diversity, we may repent of the wrongs of the past, and, by your grace, seek the peaceable kingdom of your Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**All: Amen.”** (Source: CoE Racial Justice Sunday resources)

### **Additional Prayers**

“O God, maker of heaven and earth, you uphold the cause of the oppressed: liberate those who are unjustly treated and those imprisoned by their prejudices, that there may be peace and goodwill among your people. We ask this in the name of Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**All: Amen.”** (Source: CoE Racial Justice Sunday resources)

“God of compassion, who sent Jesus Christ to deliver us from all manner of injustices and inequalities, create in us new hearts and enlarged visions to see your image in every person irrespective of background, race and ethnicity. May we be generous in our love of others as we work towards ending misunderstanding, racism and injustice; creating communities of human flourishing, through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**All: Amen.”** (Source: CoE Racial Justice Sunday resources)

Introduction: A true revolution of values will soon cause us to question the fairness and justice of many of our past and present policies. We are called to play the Good Samaritan on life's road side, but that will be only an initial act. One day we must come to see that the whole Jericho road must be transformed so that men and women will not be constantly beaten and robbed as they make their journey on life's highway.

True compassion is more than flinging a coin to a beggar; it is not haphazard and superficial. Compassion sees that an edifice that produces beggars needs restructuring. A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth.

Let us pray: Ever present God, you called us to be in relationship with one another and promised to dwell wherever two or three are gathered. In our community, we are many different people; we come from many different places, have many different cultures. Open our hearts that we may be bold in finding the riches of inclusion and the treasures of diversity among us. We pray in faith. **Amen.**

### **Prayers for use at Eucharist**

“Confession We have wilfully misused your gifts of creation;  
Lord, be merciful:

**All: forgive us our sin.**

We have seen the ill-treatment of others and have not gone to their aid;  
Lord, be merciful:

**All: forgive us our sin.**

We have condoned evil and dishonesty and failed to strive for justice;  
Lord, be merciful:

**All: forgive us our sin.**

We have heard the good news of Christ, but have failed to share it with others; Lord, be merciful:

**All: forgive us our sin.**

We have not loved you with all our heart, nor our neighbours as ourselves;  
Lord, be merciful:

**All: forgive us our sin.”**

(Source: CoE Racial Justice Sunday resources)

### **Prayers of Intercession**

These are examples of prayers that you are welcome to use during your Prayers of Intercession or you may write your own.

“We pray for all victims of racial hatred and discrimination, and we seek your protection for those affected in our churches, our schools, our places of work and our communities.

Lord, in your mercy,

**All: Hear our prayer”**

“We pray for ourselves. May we be voices against oppression and channels of the transforming power of the gospel. Open our hearts to all who suffer in our midst but out of sight. Help us to work for a world where human beings are

valued, where no one is enslaved, and no one used against their will for another's pleasure or need.

Lord, in your mercy,

**All: Hear our prayer”**

“We pray that we may know the power of reconciliation. Wherever there is division between us and others, because of our race or ethnicity, we pray that we may all be led to reconciliation. We pray for all who work to bring communities together in ways that are just and equal for all.

Lord, in your mercy,

**All: Hear our prayer”**

(Source: Liturgical Resources for Black History Month CoE, 2024 Racial Justice Commission)

### **Readings and short passages from scripture**

“The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners.”  
Isaiah 61.1

“[The Lord] has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” Micah 6.8

“But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.” Amos 5.24

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.” Luke 4.18–19

“I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13.34–35

“For in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith. As many of you as were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.” Galatians 3.26–29

“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.” Philippians 2.3–4

“Let mutual love continue. Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those who are being tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured.” Hebrews 13.1–3

“You do well if you really fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ But if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.” James 2.8–9

“After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands.” Revelation 7.9

### **Acts of commitment to racial justice**

*An Act of Commitment to Racial Justice This Act of Commitment may be used as part of a Service of the Word, at the conclusion of a Eucharist, or as part of a meeting, Bible study, or gathering.*

Dear people of God, we stand in the shadow of the prophets crying out for justice and peace. God calls us to be a people of reconciliation, serving a world in need. Courageous women and men have taken the risk of standing up and speaking out for the least and the lowest. This work involves risking ourselves for the sake of God’s love and moving beyond ourselves in order to seek and serve Christ and one another. We are all called to the work and ministry of social justice and reconciliation.

Will you persevere in prayer and fellowship?

**All: With the help of God, I will.**

Will you proclaim the good news of reconciliation in both word and deed?

**All: With the help of God, I will.**

Will you acknowledge and address the prejudices that keep you loving all God’s children?

**All: With the help of God, I will.**

Will you strive to see Christ in all persons, and value those with whom you disagree?

**All: With the help of God, I will.**

Will you seek to mend what is broken by human sin and greed?

**All: With the help of God, I will.**

Will you strive to speak words that liberate and heal and break the bonds of silence?

**All: With the help of God, I will.**

Will you seek the perfect love which casts out all fear?

**All: With the help of God, I will.**

Will you work toward dismantling the sin of abuse of power?

**All: With the help of God, I will.**

May almighty God empower you to continue his work of reconciliation, give you the courage to overcome fears and embody love, give you grace to grow in self-awareness and personal integrity, and strengthen you to seek the unity that is in Christ, that we may rejoice with all God's children as disciples of God's Son. **All: Amen.**

(Source: CoE Racial Justice Sunday resources)

### **Litany for racial justice**

Let us not rush to the language of healing, before understanding the fullness of the injury and the depth of the wound.

Let us not rush to offer a bandage, when gaping wounds require surgery and complete reconstruction.

Let us not offer false equivalencies, thereby diminishing the particular pain being felt in a particular circumstance in a particular historical moment.

Let us not speak of reconciliation [and Truth and Reconciliation] without speaking of reparations and restoration, or how we can repair the breach and how we can restore the loss.

Let us not rush past the loss of this mother's child, this father's child...someone's beloved son.

Let us not value property over people; let us not protect material objects while human lives hang in the balance.

Let us not value a false peace over a righteous justice.

Let us not be afraid to sit with the ugliness, messiness, and the pain that is life in community together.

Let us not offer clichés to the grieving, those whose hearts are being torn asunder.

Instead... Let us mourn [missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls]

Let us lament the loss of [those succumbed to addictions, mental illness, poverty, and homelessness resulting from systemic racism]

Let us call for the mourning men and the wailing women, those willing to rend their garments of privilege and ease, and sit in the ashes of [Canada's] original sin.

Let us be silent when we don't know what to say.

Let us be humble and listen to the pain, rage, and grief pouring from the lips of neighbours and friends.

Let us decrease, so that our brothers and sisters who live on the underside of history may increase.

Let us pray with our eyes open and our feet firmly planted on the ground.

Let us listen to the shattering glass & let us smell the purifying fires, for it is the language of the unheard.

God, in your mercy... Show me my own complicity in injustice.

Convict me for my indifference.

Forgive me when I have remained silent.

Equip me with a zeal for righteousness.

Never let me grow accustomed or acclimated to unrighteousness.

(An adapted litany for those not ready for healing Rev Dr Yolanda Pierce, Prinetown Seminary)



### **Litany of repentance and reconciliation**

“God of all, we confess that we have inherited a faith that was used to justify the theft of native lands and the enslavement of your people. From this sin, we ask for deliverance.

**All: Forgive us for where we have failed to understand, Lord, and in your mercy, set us free.”**

“Grant us courage to renounce the false teaching that we can somehow know you without being committed to justice for all people.

**All: Forgive us for where we have failed to understand, Lord, and in your mercy, set us free.”**

“As we name and unlearn the habits of racism, discrimination, and prejudice, give us grace to draw deeply from the witness of the movements that have always resisted injustice in the power of your Spirit.

**All: Forgive us for where we have failed to understand, Lord, and in your mercy, set us free.”**

(Source: Liturgical Resources for Black History Month CoE, 2024 Racial Justice Commission)

### **Music: Hymns and worship songs related to racial justice and community**

Parishes are encouraged to choose music that reflects the theme of community, love, transformation, and justice

They Will Know We Are Christians By Our Love (aka One in the Spirit)

I surrender All (J.W. Van DeVenter)

We Believe (Newsboys)

Amazing Grace

Waymaker (Sinach, Leeland, Hillsong United)