

# Welcome to St Anne's: Racial Justice Sunday

## 11th February 2024

From the moment of creation,  
each and every one of us  
loved and cherished by you,  
your fingerprints upon us,  
**your hopes and dreams spoken between  
the Trinity of Love, for us.**

Your divine hopes and dreams given to be  
shared by all –  
**regardless of where we are from,**  
despite how we may well fall short,  
**all because of the worth we have, bestowed  
upon us by you.**

Saving God,  
**you persevere with us,**  
**you dare to hope extravagantly for us,**  
**you were willing to die and rise for us,**  
**help us to do the same for each other.**  
**Amen.**

### 14. The Lord's Prayer

Let us pray for the coming of God's kingdom  
in the words our Saviour taught us:

**Our Father in heaven,**  
**hallowed be your name.**  
**Your kingdom come,**  
**your will be done,**  
**on earth as it is in heaven.**  
**Give us today our daily bread.**  
**Forgive us our sins,**  
**as we forgive those who sin against us.**  
**Lead us not into temptation,**  
**but deliver us from evil.**  
**For the kingdom, the power and the glory**  
**are yours, now and for ever. Amen.**

### 15. Hymn 571 (to Wiltshire) (stand)

We bring you, Lord, our prayer and praise  
that every child of earth  
should live and grow in freedom's ways,  
in dignity and worth.

We praise for such a task begun  
to serve each other's need,  
for every cause of justice won,  
for every fetter freed.

Our prayers are for a world in pain  
where force and fear prevail,  
the plough becomes the sword again,  
and hope and harvests fail.

Alike our prayer and praise express  
the wants of humankind,  
that those in bondage and distress  
their larger freedoms find.

So may we still maintain the fight  
till earth's oppressions cease  
before the universal right  
to liberty and peace.

In Christ we learn to love and care  
and spread his truth abroad;  
and in his Name we lift our prayer:  
'Your kingdom come, O Lord.'

### 16. Sending Prayer

Journeying God,  
be with us as we continue to journey through  
life each day.

In each step we take, may we walk ever  
closer with you.

In the light of day and in the darkness of  
night, where the ground is sure or uneven,  
may we walk with faith and hope and love.  
Let each step today be sure, humble and just.  
**Amen.**

### 17. The Peace

God calls us to peace:  
**in God's justice is our peace.**  
Christ calls us to be God's people  
**in Christ is our peace.**

The peace of the Lord be always with you  
**and also with you.**

Go in the joy and peace of Christ  
**Thanks be to God.**

*(Signs of peace and friendship are exchanged)*

### 1. Welcome and Introduction (sit)

Today the Church of England celebrates  
the Feast of the Transfiguration. We are  
also, in churches throughout the United  
Kingdom and Ireland, urged to mark Racial  
Justice Sunday. Both these themes will be  
present in our service.

This year the theme for Racial Justice  
Sunday is migration. This is a contested  
political issue in our nation currently.  
We shall not dwell on the political aspects  
but will rather focus on the scale of  
migration across the planet, the pressures  
facing those people who are displaced  
and become migrants  
and we will pray for reconciliation and  
healing wherever there is social discord.  
As it is the Feast of the Transfiguration,  
we will pray that the glory of Christ may  
transform even the darkest corners of  
our world.

### 2. Opening Prayer

Ever-present God, you call us to be in  
relationship with one another.

**In our coming together, unite us in spirit  
and truth.**

You promise to dwell wherever two or three  
are gathered.

In our communities, we are many different  
people.

**As we gather, may we reflect the Image of  
God.**

Your Church comes from many different  
places, and many different cultures.

**Hear us, O God, and blend our voices into  
one song of worship.**

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.**

### 3. Hymn 555 (-v3) (stand)

Cry 'Freedom!' in the name of God,  
and let the cry resound;  
proclaim for all that freedom which in Jesus  
Christ is found,  
for none of us is truly free while anyone is  
bound.

*Cry 'Freedom!' Cry 'Freedom!'  
Cry 'Freedom!' in God's name!*

Cry 'Freedom!' for the victims of the  
earthquakes and the rain:  
where wealthy folk find shelter and the poor  
must bear the pain;  
where weapons claim resources while the  
famine strikes again.

*Cry 'Freedom!' .....*

Cry 'Freedom!' in the church when honest  
doubts are met with fear;  
when vacuum-packed theology makes  
questions disappear;  
when journeys end before they start and  
mystery is clear!

*Cry 'Freedom!' .....*

Cry 'Freedom!' when we find ourselves  
imprisoned in our greed,  
to live in free relationship and meet each  
other's need.

From self released for other's good we should  
be free indeed!

*Cry 'Freedom!' .....*

### 4. Migration (sit)

Over 100 million people across the globe have  
been forced to leave their homes, roughly half  
of whom are children. Most seek sanctuary in  
other parts of the country they are from with  
many in the country next door. The top three  
countries for refugees are Afghanistan, Syria  
and Ukraine.

Long-running conflicts in Africa, the Middle East and Asia have led to people seeking a better life in Europe. While overall British attitudes to refugees are positive, there has been disquiet and some verbal and physical harassment, especially over the costs and location of accommodation. The Old Testament contains 37 commands to 'love the stranger'. The entire Book of Ruth is the story of a refugee family. In the New Testament we read that the Holy Family fled as refugees to Egypt from the terror unleashed by King Herod.

Let us ask for forgiveness and mercy for our world where so much violence and hatred causes people to flee their homes, and for ourselves where we fail to engage with the suffering in our world.



### 5. Call to Penitence (sit/kneel)

When we say we will strive to make a difference, but falter at the first hurdle, misstep or trespass,

God of all compassion, in your mercy,  
**Guide our steps.**

When we seek to challenge practices and systems that oppress, but end up wounding ourselves or others,

God of all compassion, in your mercy,  
**Tend our wounds.**

When we seek to defend the honour and dignity of others, but instead protect our privilege or reputation,

God of all compassion, in your mercy,  
**Forgive our sins.**

When we cling to ideals or old habits that sow seeds of racism,

God of all compassion, in your mercy,  
**Deliver us from evil.**

God of all compassion, in your mercy,  
**Hear our prayers.**

God of all compassion, in your mercy,  
**Hear our groans and cries.**

God of all compassion, in your mercy,  
**Sense our despair and our hope.**

God of all compassion, in your mercy,  
**Hear our prayers. Amen.**

May the Trinity of Love bind up our wounds, challenge our complacency, lead us to freedom and abundance, for the sake of peace and harmony, as our Creator ordained it.  
**Amen.**

### 6. Hymn 365 (omit v 2,3) (stand)

Let us build a house where love can dwell and all can safely live, a place where saints and children tell how hearts learn to forgive. Built of hopes and dreams and visions, rock of faith and vault of grace; here the love of Christ shall end divisions, *all are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.*

Let us build a place where hands will reach beyond the wood and stone to heal and strengthen, serve and teach, and live the Word they've known. Here the outcast and the stranger bear the image of God's face; let us bring an end to fear and danger; *all are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.*

Let us build a house where all are named, their songs and visions heard and loved and treasured, taught and claimed as words within the Word. Built of tears and cries and laughter, prayers of faith and songs of grace, let this house proclaim from floor to rafter: *all are welcome, all are welcome, all are welcome in this place.*

### 7. Prayer for Racial Justice Sunday (sit)

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

### 8. Gospel Reading - see Network (sit)

#### 9. Story: Uzo Iwobi—my birth.

My parents were refugees during the Biafran War in Nigeria. They were forced to flee their home in the village of Abonkwu when it became a target for bombing by government forces.

My father hired a lorry that could hold 27 people and drove them through the night with the headlights extinguished. They ended up arriving in a far distant village inhabited by very disadvantaged people. Despite their hardship, they were wonderful and kind. They opened their homes and my parents were taken in with all three children. Lack of fuel meant we could not take the lorry any further. My pregnant mother ended up giving birth to me with no medical help available.

One of the villagers had a bicycle which had a section where my mother could sit. He cycled my mother and myself to a hospital three miles away where we could receive medical help.

Even though these villagers had very little to eat themselves, and very little to wear, they showed an overwhelming kindness to complete strangers who were tired, exhausted and hungry.

My parents never forgot the circumstances into which I was born, which is why my full name is Uzoamaka which means 'the doorway to blessing'. They arrived in a place where the door for blessing had been graciously opened to them.'

### 10. Sermon followed by Reflection

#### 11. Hymn 604 (stand)

Brother, sister, let me serve you, let me be as Christ to you; pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant too.

We are pilgrims on a journey, and companions on the road; we are here to help each other walk the mile and bear the load.

I will hold the Christ-light for you in the night-time of your fear; I will hold my hand out to you, speak the peace you long to hear.

I will weep when you are weeping; when you laugh I'll laugh with you; I will share your joy and sorrow till we've seen this journey through.

When we sing to God in heaven, we shall find such harmony, born of all we've known together of Christ's love and agony.

Brother, sister, let me serve you, let me be as Christ to you; pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant too.

### 12. Prayers of Intercession (sit/kneel)

*Bidding* God of Justice

*Response* **Show yourself**

### 13. Prayer of Assurance

Abba Father, we, made in your image, we, made by your hand, we, loved so deeply by our Creator, we, cared for so intently by our Saviour, **are blessed to call ourselves children of God.**

You blessed our differences with your kiss, **as you breathed your life and love into our lungs.**