

Idea for Group activity for Racial Justice Sunday September 12th!!!!
Luke 15:1-32 or Luke 15:11-32

The story of the prodigal son is a story of God's reconciliation and justice that can be quite different from what society offers. The son wasted his money, and accepted his actions were wrong – but he also experienced being cast out of society with no hope for his future. What might the story of the prodigal son look like today?

In this exercise we will consider a few recent news stories about people in the news who have broken the law and are serving, or will be serving, criminal sentences. As people of black and asian backgrounds are disproportionately represented in prison, we will especially consider what their experience might look like in view of God's reconciling acceptance – and how we can be agents in God's ongoing work in Jesus Christ.

The UK has a larger prison population than any Western European country. The black and Asian communities in the UK are disproportionately represented in the UK prison system. For example, in 2002 there were 2.3 million Black, Asian and Minority Women (BAME) in the UK, making up just under 4% of the total population -- or less than 8% of the total female population of the UK. But black or asian women make up 31% of female prisoners (Source: "Black Women's Experiences of the Criminal Justice system," Ruth Chigwada-Bailey, Consultant Criminologist <http://www.black-history-month.co.uk/articles/blackwomensperiences.html>)

That week the leader will have looked through newspapers and selected a few stories (or case studies) involving perpetrators of crimes or societal "sins" that result in the sort of ostracization that the "prodigal" or "wasteful" son experienced. Perhaps the clippings could be brought in to share. Small groups could consider each of these stories and then consider questions like the following:

What would God's reconciliation look like in this particular situation? (perhaps an apology, an appeal for forgiveness, a new relationship started, a life begun anew, etc.)

What other forces are operative in the situation, given a context of societal racism and entrenched poverty in many ethnic minority communities in the UK?

What would be the full picture of God's reconciliation? Can you separate the individual and his or her crime from the bigger picture?

After considering the questions perhaps a collage could be made of the press clippings and the headlines. Perhaps there could be a liturgy of prayer or a brief period of prayer, including a period of repentance for our continuing role in hidden racism in society today.

Prayer Group

Thank you for sending Your son Jesus Christ to die on the cross so that all may come to know You. Keep us safe in Your arms and as we worship You today, may we celebrate the wonderful gift of Your love.

Amen

Praise and Adoration

Lord God, creator of the universe,
blessed be Your name for ever.

Lord Jesus Christ, creator of all that is human kind and living creatures,
blessed be Your name for ever.

Holy Spirit of the living God,
giver and sustainer of life,
blessed be your name for ever.

Holy Trinity, You created the human race in your own image.

You have protected and provided for all human beings.

You alone, Holy Trinity, are worthy of adoration and praise.

You called and changed many who were your enemies.

Who denied and persecuted Your people.

You have been merciful to those who did not have faith.

The sinners Your son came to save because of Your abundant grace
and, through Your Spirit that caused them to have faith in Him,
praise and adore you.

Your redeemed sons and daughters within the human race
praise your holy name
and serve You

and glorify You by loving and serving others without distinction.

Holy Trinity,

because of Your patience with us sinners,

because of Your calling us as witnesses for future generations,
we bless Your holy name.

Amen

Prayer of thanksgiving

Dear God

We thank you for the love shown to us by the gift of Your son, Jesus Christ, who died on the cross to save us from damnation. We were lost and searching to change our ways; we felt that we would never mend our uncaring attitudes but you showed love, mercy and grace towards us and our faith was restored.

Thank You heavenly Father for Your steadfast love and tolerance. We are Your children and you know each one of us as different individuals in Your sight. We can always rely on You to forgive and guide us through the right paths of righteousness.

We praise you dear God!

Amen

Our loving Father

We thank You for loving us and claiming us as 'Your children'.

Father, You give us so much.

We look around today and see the beauty which you have bestowed on us.

We praise Your wonderful name as we gather in worship.

But Father we are aware that there are still so many who do not know You.

We lift them up to You as we know that You seek to find the oppressed, the lost and ones who have strayed away from You.

Father we have all sinned and, at times, gone away from your teachings.
We ask for Your forgiveness.
We pray Father forgive.

Thank you for sending your son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross so that all may come to know You.
Keep us safe in Your arms and, as we worship you today, may we celebrate the wonderful gift of your love.

Amen

Almighty God, creator of heaven and earth.
We thank You for Your loving kindness.
You are a harmonious and peaceful God who created us in Your own image. You are the transcendent and immanent God who revealed Yourself to us in Your creation and in Jesus Christ, Your son;
the immortal and eternal God.
But we fail to know You.
In our foolishness, we fail to know and acknowledge You as God.
We are corrupt and have done terrible things and have failed to worship You in spirit and truth.
In ignorance and arrogance, we frustrate the work of your people.
We have come repentantly and ask for forgiveness.
Jesus Lord, we ask for mercy.
Let our prayers not be in vain.
We have come repentantly.
Father, Lord reveal Yourself to us; put us together as a family.
Reconcile us to Yourself and to one another.

Loving and merciful God
You are the source of our hope;
Your mercy and compassion beyond compare.
We praise You that, despite our foolishness and lack of faithfulness,
it is Your nature:
to offer forgiveness;
to give us a fresh start;
to allow us to leave our past mistakes behind.

God of amazing grace,
we remember how you sent Your judgment upon Judah
and yet Your love was too strong to abandon Your people
and You led them home to rebuild Jerusalem.
Though we feel so small and irrelevant,
to You,
we are precious and You refuse to let us go.
You are the shepherd who rejoices when a lost sheep is found.
You are the one who calls us back to You with open arms,

ready to embrace us no matter how far we have drifted away.
You are the God of mercy and forgiveness,
of compassion and of grace.
We offer You our heartfelt praise and thankful hearts,
in the name of Christ.
Amen

We pray for people in countries where there is conflict within
- tribe against tribe
- people of one faith against those of another.
We think of Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Sri Lanka . . .
We pray for areas where sovereignty is disputed
and cultures clash.
We think of Nepal, Burma . . .
We pray for neighbouring countries that refuse to accept that each other has the right to exist.
We think of Israel and Palestine . . .
We pray for people that profess to be members of the same faith but cannot live in peace with
each other.
We pray for Pakistan, Iraq and still in Ireland . . .
And at home,
communities,
some native to this country,
others that have arrived over the centuries – newcomers,
may they see that there is room for all to live peacefully together.
O God, we pray for ourselves – may we see others as equals in Your sight regardless of creed,
colour, gender, sexuality, disability . . .

Children's address

1. Powerful images – use projector
(use of cartoon)
Ask Junior Church to a) develop b) perform c) present

Reading – lost sheep – Luke 15 v 1-6

To think about . . . time when you felt left out (new school term starts)
2. In church have a 'sheep hunt'
Pictures of sheep hidden – on the backs have parts of the text
Text is part of a jigsaw that makes up a banner.
Pictionary – words (taken from text) such as sheep, shoulder . . . to be drawn by member of
group (without saying word) group to guess.
3. Children to link Acts 10 vs 34 with 'lost sheep'
Identify differences
Identify similarities
Link to racial justice . . . how does that affect me and my world?

Present to church

4. Celebration