

## A theological framework for schools: Racial Justice



## Creation

### For school staff – a Christian theology of racial justice builds on these beliefs:

- Everything God made is deemed 'good'
- Human beings are made in God's image – every human being bears the likeness of God (Genesis 1).
- Only in full diversity (multi-cultural, multi-racial) can the full image of God be seen.
- All humans are 'wonderfully and fearfully made' (Psalm 139) and have intrinsic worth.
- Humans are given authority and responsibility for stewarding creation, but not over one another; rather they are equally subject to God's rule. No person or of people are superior to any other in God's creation order (Genesis 2).

### EYSF

- Everyone is equally special
- Our world is a wonderful place, full of all kinds of people. It is a more wonderful place because people are all different.
- We love to explore and discover new things; we are curious and enjoy learning about different people, places and stories.

### KS1

- We are all equal; no one is more special than anyone else
- In our world, people have different skin colours, different accents, speak different languages, eat different food, wear different clothes and believe differentWe celebrate our differences.

### KS2

- In our country, we have a long and rich history which involves the contribution of people from many different races, ethnicities and beliefs.
- We value the contribution of a whole range of people, not just those who look, think or speak like us.
- We recognise that humans do not have the right to own or dominate others for any reason, in particular, because of their race.

## Fall

### For school staff – a Christian theology of racial justice builds on these beliefs:

- Sin enters the world when humans disobey God and try to be superior to their original design – in ‘eating the apple’ they sin by demonstrating their desire to *be like God*. (Genesis 3)
- Blame, division, separation of one from ‘the other’ and struggling for power result from the Fall. This has led to the ‘sin’ of racial injustice. The Tower of Babel is an illustration of people misusing their similarities to get fame and power – i.e. to be like God (Genesis 11).
- God is described as the judge of all; he cannot abide sin and he is seen throughout scripture as being particularly strong on those who are unjust (Psalm 7, Isaiah 10).
- Both individuals (personal sin) and whole nations (systemic evil) are called out for being complicit in injustice – for excluding those who are different, oppressed or vulnerable.

### Pre-KS2

- We know that everyone makes mistakes, but it is important to make amends, especially if someone has been hurt.
- We recognise that some people claim to be better than others, but that’s not right or fair.
- Hurting someone, leaving them out or calling them names because of their skin colour, place of origin, religion, language or culture is not right and not how Christians believe God intended the world to be.

### KS2

- Christians believe that when people think they can be like God (e.g. all-powerful and knowing everything), or if they stop themselves and others from living how God wants them to, this is called ‘sin’.
- We have personal responsibility for acting justly and also saying if something is not right/ fair/ just.
- Excluding others because they are different to us is wrong; it hurts them and it hurts us.

## Old Covenant (including Prophecy and Wisdom)

### For school staff – a Christian theology of racial justice builds on these beliefs:

- God chooses a particular group of people (the Israelites) in order that they share God's love and blessing with everyone else. Their special role is to be a 'light' and a 'beacon' to point everyone to God (Isaiah 49).
- The Exodus narrative is a key theme through the Old Testament – where God's people are rescued from slavery (celebrated at Pesach/ Passover).
- Moses, as the human agent of liberation in the Exodus, is a key figure in black theology. For anyone who has encountered oppression, or whose history has been one of slavery or coercion, this is a crucial narrative which shows the compassion and identification of God with the enslaved, the anger of God against the oppressor and the hope presented by the liberation of the oppressed (Exodus 1-14).
- The Israelites are encouraged to return over and over to this story – remembering not to live as slaves, but free; to know God as their rescuer; to see everything and everyone else through this perspective: 'Do not mistreat or oppress a foreigner, for you were foreigners in Egypt' (Exodus 22:21).
- God's people suffer oppression, war, exile and almost genocide (see the book of Esther). Some of these injustices last for hundreds of years. The Old Testament prophets comfort them that God is still with them and will rescue and redeem them.
- Their suffering is a great sadness, and evidence of sin and evil in the world. God condemns all forms of injustice throughout the Old Testament (Isaiah 58).
- God's people are told repeatedly to act justly, and to ensure the most vulnerable are cared for and included (Micah 6).

### KS1

- We should always try and help people if they are in trouble, including people who are different to us. We can be 'lights' to them.
- It is never right to force someone to do things for you. If someone tries to force us to do things we don't want to do, we should say no and ask for help.
- We should treat everyone fairly and everyone should get the same chances. This is true for people who are different from us.

### KS2

- Slavery is wrong and should always be stopped. Although slavery is illegal all over the world, people are still forced to become slaves.
- We can make a difference to how people are treated; we can think about what we buy, where we shop, what we wear and what we eat. Information about Modern Slavery can be found through the [Clewley Initiative](#)
- It is important to remember the history of how people became slaves; by recognising what people did wrong in forcing people to be slaves, we can learn how to act in a more just and fair way towards others. We need to hear the stories of people who encountered this injustice.
- We should celebrate people who actively fought/continue to fight against injustice – who have stood up against slavery and warned about genocide. We need to ensure the people we recognise are diverse and value the contribution made by people of different races, ethnicities, cultures and beliefs.

## Incarnation

### For school staff – a Christian theology of racial justice builds on these beliefs:

- God became human ('flesh') as a Jewish person living in Judea (modern day Israel) during Roman occupation. As Jesus could have lived on earth at any time in history, this is indicative of God's affinity and empathy with the oppressed. (John 1)
- Jesus starts his life as a refugee, fleeing from death at the hands of King Herod. (Matthew 2)
- The lowly circumstances of his birth while surprising (the Magi were amazed to find he hadn't been born in a palace), reinforces his mission to those marginalised in society, rather than identifying with those in power and authority. (Matthew 2)
- Jesus is both fully God (with the power to liberate, heal, restore justice) and fully man (experiencing pain, abuse, hardship as well as the joy of diverse relationships). (Colossians 1)

### EYFS

- Baby Jesus was Jewish, and lived in the Middle East. We celebrate people of all colours – they are all special.
- When he grew up, he rescued and helped people – often people who were different to him. We can help people too – everyone not just people like us!

### KS1

- Jesus was a refugee, who had to escape from a dangerous situation. This should make us rethink how we see refugees today.
- Jesus spent his time with people who were different to him, always showing them love, compassion and welcome. He also expected the same from his followers. How do we treat those who seem different to us?

### KS2

- Christians believe that when God became human, Jesus didn't come as a powerful person, but as someone whose country was being ruled by another (Roman Empire). He knows what it's like to be oppressed. Why does this matter?
- Jesus used his power to heal, protect vulnerable people and challenge injustice. Do we have any power? How do we use it?

## Gospel

### For school staff – a Christian theology of racial justice builds on these beliefs:

- Jesus preaches and enacts a Gospel which is radically for all – especially the marginalised (see the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5-7).
- He challenges those in power – turning their ‘righteousness’ upside down for its lack of justice (e.g. Matthew 23).
- Jesus repeatedly speaks positively about those who are different, often in contrast to his own people, e.g. the Good Samaritan is the true neighbour (Luke 10), the Samaritan with leprosy is the one who says thank you (Luke 17), the Roman centurion has ‘more faith than in Israel’ (Matthew 8).
- Jesus teaches that whatever is done to the most oppressed and vulnerable, is done to him (Matthew 25).
- There is no coercion in the Gospel (e.g. the Rich Young Ruler, unwilling to commit, is free to walk away) – all are free to choose to follow Christ or not. Early Christians were persecuted for their faith, as many still are around the world, not coerced into believing to fulfil cultural ‘norms’ or to buy their freedom (Luke 18).
- At Pentecost, the Gospel (‘good news’) message about Jesus is preached in many different languages – ensuring it is heard by people from as many cultures as possible. God’s blessing, which was originally intended for all people, is finally made fully available to all (Acts 2).
- One of the very first believers is a member of the Ethiopian court, who spreads Christianity to Ethiopia and on through Africa - well before Christianity reaches Europe (Acts 8).

### KS1

- What should we do if we see people being hurt because they are different?
- How do we treat people who are different to us? What about people from different cultures?
- The earliest believers in Christianity were in the Middle East and Africa (e.g. Ethiopia) and spoke lots of different languages. What else have we learnt from other areas in the world?

### KS2

- Why should we care about others being mistreated?
- In the Bible, Jesus taught that justice for the oppressed was more important than ‘being religious’. Do our actions matter more than our words?
- Freedom of religion is a human right (UNCHR); where we see examples in history or in our world today of people being made to believe certain things, how should we respond?
- Christianity is not a white person’s religion – people of all cultures, races, languages and backgrounds are Christians. What other elements of life do diverse people share?

# Salvation

## For school staff – a Christian theology of racial justice builds on these beliefs:

- Throughout his ministry, Jesus saved people – often from the things that kept them excluded from society (such as healing leprosy, or speaking up for a woman caught in adultery). He didn't keep his saving power just for Jewish people (although this brought him criticism) – he looked all the time to those whom society rejected or mistreated and showed compassion.
- At the cross, Jesus experienced the full pain of injustice – he therefore knows what it is to be falsely accused, mistreated, tortured, mocked and executed (Matthew 27).
- The cross becomes the ultimate symbol of justice for Christians, as through Christ's death, people can be *justified* (made right) with God (Romans 5).
- Sin and evil are dealt with at the cross – both personal and systemic. Although their effects continue, Christians can look to an ultimate future where sin is no more, where suffering and injustice end completely (Hebrews 2; Revelation 21).
- The resurrection demonstrates the power of God, and the triumph over sin and death. The Bible teaches that this power lives within Christians through the Holy Spirit, enabling them to fight injustice wherever they see it (Romans 8).
- Because of Jesus' death and resurrection, anyone can be forgiven. There is hope and a way to change/ do better when we get things wrong (1 John).

## EYFS

- Everybody is worth rescuing – we help people who are like us and we help people who are different to us.
- When we see something unfair, we say!
- If we do something unfair or unkind, we say sorry and try to make it better.
- At Easter, Christians celebrate that Jesus died and came back to life to show that God loves everyone.

## KS1

- People being hurt is always wrong – if we see it happening, we do something about it.
- At Easter, Christians remember that Jesus rose from the dead; his death wasn't the end. We want to change things so people aren't hurt anymore.
- They also remember that even though Jesus hadn't done anything wrong, he was still put on a cross. He knows what it's like to be punished for something he didn't do. If people are unfair to us, we know we are not alone. This helps us speak up for other people, too.

## KS2

- When we see people who are being badly treated because of their skin colour, religion or culture we don't stand by, we stand up and do something.
- If we have said hurtful things, not included people or failed to act when we saw something unjust – we can ask for forgiveness and make a change so we do better next time.
- We reflect on the difference it makes if someone stands up for us, or takes our place.
- We think about people who have been treated unfairly throughout history, and today in our world. We consider what we can do differently.

## **New Covenant (Kingdom of God/ Apocalypse)**

### **For school staff – a Christian theology of racial justice builds on these beliefs:**

- Jesus summed up the Old Testament law by teaching his followers they should ‘love one another as I have loved you’ (John 13); when asked who we are to love, Jesus responded with a story which exemplified this love through the actions of a person usually despised in their culture – a Samaritan (Luke 10).
- St Paul speaks of Christians as ‘the body of Christ’, regardless of their background or heritage. It is their faith in Christ that unites them (1 Corinthians 12; Galatians 3).
- Within this ‘body’ there should be an identification with one another’s suffering and celebration of one another’s achievements; this should apply to everyone. Therefore, if someone is oppressed or hurting, it is the responsibility of the church to empathise and take action. Equally, if someone does well, they should be celebrated and lifted up. This should apply to people of every race, ethnicity, culture and belief (1 Corinthians 12).
- The Bible narrative points towards a time when there will be a ‘new heaven and a new earth’ and everything will once again be as God intended. In this re-creation, ‘every nation, tribe and tongue’ will be represented. In fact, it will not be complete without them (Revelation 7).
- Therefore, ‘fullness of life’ requires diverse representation.
- At the re-creation, there will be no more pain, death or sorrow – this is a vital sign of hope for people who have been oppressed (Revelation 21).

### **KS1**

- When someone is hurt or sad, we ask how we can help them. When we can, we take action to stop people hurting.
- We find out about the achievements of lots of different people so we can celebrate them.
- We enjoy learning about people who are different from us; it helps us to understand more about the world.

### **KS2**

- We explore and discover the stories of people who are different from us. We take the time to learn about both their struggles and their successes.
- We want to find out why some people suffer more than others, identifying where discrimination has caused their pain. We learn from their experiences about what we can do better.
- We recognise who is missing from our community and intentionally seek to find out about cultures we are unfamiliar with.
- We strive to be ‘good neighbours’ (See Christian Aid’s [Global Neighbours](#) Scheme).
- We wonder how people who suffer can have hope for the future