

LET JUSTICE ROLL

Easter Offering 2024 was prepared by Methodist Women in Britain in support of the World Mission Fund.



Easter Offering 2024

The World Mission Fund supports work with over 100 Partner Churches and organisations across the world, in collaboration with the Methodist Church in Ireland.

 **Methodist Women
in Britain**
for women, for justice, for Christ

 **The Methodist Church**

Welcome

A very warm welcome to this Easter Offering service. Methodist Women in Britain, as a justice-seeking charity, has chosen the theme 'Let Justice Roll' for this year.

Shared by church communities across the country, this service raises funds for the Methodist Church's global partnerships through the World Mission Fund, in collaboration with the Methodist Church in Ireland.

Methodist Women in Britain prepares the Easter Offering service every year as a gift to the Methodist people, following a tradition of fundraising begun nearly 140 years ago. All monies raised are given directly to the World Mission Fund.

Call to Worship

"But let justice roll on like a river,
righteousness like a never-failing stream!"

(Amos 5:24, NIV)

Optional Hymn: Freedom is coming
(*Singing the Faith 697*)

Gathering Prayer

Lord, as we gather as your people, a small community in the family of your worldwide Church, open us up to love of you and love of neighbour. We offer our hearts to your worship and our lives to your service. Renew our strength and re-kindle our vision as we meet to find our way, anew, in you.

Amen.

Hymn: Jesus calls us here to meet him
(StF 28 omit verse 4)

Opening Remarks

Amos speaks of justice rolling “on like a river...” This tells us that God’s justice is not finite but instead rolls forward, gathering momentum as people work for justice and their actions feed into communities and lives.

Justice can never be seen as ‘done’. Rather, God calls us to ongoing awareness and action.

In the sharing of stories and through this act of worship we call upon God’s people to champion what is right – encouraging everyone, everywhere to value justice, both individually and in community.

Prayers of Praise and Confession

With the glory of Easter in our hearts, we come before you, loving God, in praise and thanksgiving. We worship and thank you for the good news that Jesus is risen and alive among us.

**For the knowledge that you are always with us,
we praise you.**

Your love encircles our world: we see you in the power and light of the sun, the strength of the wind and waves of the sea, the vastness and beauty of our universe and the balance of life from the microscopic insect to the largest sea creature.

**For the knowledge that you are always with us,
we praise you.**

We praise you for this world's diversity and the variety of life, for the opportunities to serve you and one another each day.

For the knowledge that you are always with us, we praise you.

And yet, we have taken your gifts for granted. We have ignored the signs of climate change, we have polluted rivers and seas, spoiling your wonderful creation.

Teach us to live not by our values, but by yours.

We have not shared our resources, causing famines, hardship and wars. We have ignored cries for help.

Teach us to live not by our values, but by yours.

Forgive us, Resurrecting God. Help us to revive your world, to find better ways to live in peace and harmony. Speak to us through this joyful season and fill us with greater trust and deeper faith so that we may live as people of your resurrection power.

We ask this in the name of Jesus, our Risen Christ.

Amen.

Watch: Introduction to the World Mission Fund

This service celebrates the Easter giving of Methodists to the World Mission Fund. Here is a short animation about its work, which your donations will support.

For this new video about the World Mission Fund go to:

methodist.org.uk/WorldMissionFund

Story: Justice for people marginalised by disability – a story from our global Methodist community

Across the world, people with disabilities are often treated unfairly and can find it hard to challenge the injustice they face. In some societies, disability is taboo: people who are disabled find themselves pushed to the edge of their communities, and even of their families.

The Methodist Church in Tanzania is working to change this, with the support of the World Mission Fund. The Tanzanian Church is passionate about coming alongside people who are disabled and forgotten by society.

The Church works to change whole communities' attitudes towards disability. It offers training to build up skills for people who are disabled so they can fend for themselves; and to encourage their families and communities to think differently about them, and all people who live with disabilities.

Two people who have been helped are Mariam and Pascal.

Mariam has an impairment that stops her from saying even simple phrases easily – so people didn't talk to her. She had few friends, and was left out of community life. She could not find work and struggled to take care of her child.

However, with the help of the Tanzanian Church, Mariam has set up a business making charcoal, which gives her an income. This means Mariam can feed her child, and herself. She is accepted in her community: people's attitudes to Mariam are different – she's one of them now, and people warmly welcome her at church to join in worship.

Pascal has difficulty walking due to diabetes affecting the nerves in his feet. So at middle age – when he expected to be a respected member of his community – Pascal found himself excluded from normal activities. He had little food, and barely managed to keep his water supply topped up. That's not fair. But with the church's support, Pascal's life has changed. Today, he has a flourishing poultry farm, with chickens and eggs to feed himself and sell to others.

As the Church brings change to the lives of people like Mariam and Pascal, justice ripples out for more people with disabilities across the wider community. People who were living on the edge, are now self-sufficient. They have a new sense of dignity. Attitudes change, people are accepted, opportunities created and community extended.

Like Mariam and Pascal, Elizabeth is disabled and suffered injustice because of that. But she, too, has received help from the Church, and what a difference that has made! She says: "The support has really helped me and I thank God that the Church has remembered me. Before, there was nothing I could do, but now I am contributing to the community and am respected by people."

Hymn: Show me how to stand for justice (StF 713)

Reading: Luke 18:1-8

Reflection on the Reading

Story: Working for justice in an unjust world – a story from Methodist history

In 1834, over 800,000 people from all over the country signed petitions to Parliament to overturn a great injustice. This is a remarkable number – about one in every 20 people, willing to stand up and be counted at a time where there was little mass communication, no social media or Change.org, and when many people could neither read nor write. It was also a sensitive time in which to protest, yet when the petition was presented to the Home Secretary, 100,000 people took to the London streets to make their views known.

At the heart of this story are six farm labourers from Dorset who had come together to protest against the third reduction in their wages in as many years – down to six shillings a week when the ‘living wage’ would have been nearer ten.

What they were doing was not at all illegal, but the angry landowners and magistrates found an obscure law about swearing oaths under which to prosecute them. They were sentenced to seven years transportation to Australia and, as if this were not enough, the authorities did everything they could to make life difficult for their families to make an example of them too.

The petition was successful and, after a number of delays, the ‘Tolpuddle Martyrs’ were eventually returned. Most of the group settled in Essex where they continued to support causes such as the right to vote for ordinary people. But the authorities continued to make their lives uncomfortable, and they finally relocated to Canada.

Does it matter that several of the Martyrs were Methodist and two were Local Preachers? Historians think so. The courts were taken aback at how well their leaders spoke: they had expected the case to be a pushover, yet these mere agricultural labourers could read, write and command an audience at a time when there were no schools for the poor. Their oracy and literacy had been mastered in circuit preaching and their Methodist Sunday School. As they studied the Bible for themselves, they had become confident in proclaiming a kingdom in which all people can flourish.

Their courageous example became a famous milestone for justice in the story of 19th-century Britain, on the road that rolled on to eventual electoral, educational and labour reform.

Hymn: Give to me Lord, a thankful heart (StF 520)

Reflection: The seed of justice

1. The seed of justice:
A lone cry,
A protest:
'It's not fair!'
Rolling, gathering
momentum.
2. The root of justice:
'Do you hear me?
Can't you see the
unfairness?
Join me!'
Rolling, gathering
momentum.
3. The shoot of justice:
Speak to your neighbours,
Your friends,
Your family.
Rolling, gathering
momentum.
4. The flower of justice:
What will you do?
Spread it wider,
Broadcast, Pray.
Rolling, gathering
momentum.

5. The fruit of justice:
Take action together,
Campaign, persist,
Pray,
God is with you.
Rolling, gathering
momentum.

6. 'Go and bear fruit',
It is time for the harvest!
Is justice ever done?

(Ruth Parrott)

Reading: Amos 5:18-24

Story: Working for justice in a moving picture – the fair trade story

Let justice roll... down to growers, producers and artisans in the Global South so that they may receive a fair price for the goods they produce. Just as Amos railed against the weighted scales in the markets of his day, so God has raised up prophets in our generation to demand justice for his people in the global marketplace.

In 1979 Richard Adams founded Traidcraft, an organisation that prompted us to see producers more as partners and spoke out against the growing power of multinational corporations that look to their own profits rather than the welfare of their suppliers.

Fair trade was embraced by faith communities and those of no faith, and the movement grew with the founding of the Fairtrade Foundation. A shared passion for justice drew people into campaigning as well as shopping for fair trade.

For example, in the 'till receipt' campaign, Church representatives simply collected everyone's till receipts, which were then sent by the sack full to the big supermarkets.

This showed the power of ordinary people's regular spending and persuaded the major supermarkets to get fair trade products onto their shelves.

The impact of the fair trade movement is seen in communities across the world. Where people achieve a just price for their products they are able to invest in better lives for themselves and their children. The blessings of fair trade partnerships became evident during the pandemic – in Bangladesh whole villages were supported with hand wash and masks bought with the premium earned by the local fair trade cooperative.

The fair trade movement is now expanding its vision of justice and it helps communities to tackle environmental issues and address climate change – bringing justice not only to people but to the created world. For example, in India, Traidcraft Exchange supported the building of an effluent treatment plant, enabling textile workers to treat the water used to dye cloth; water which had previously been massively polluting the local water courses.

Sadly, the Traidcraft business became unviable and went into administration in January 2023. However, its legacy endures in the many businesses, large and small, that import goods on fair trade terms and who reach into all parts of the community.

For the Christian community, particularly, the demise of Traidcraft has been a great loss but the fight goes on. Tea, coffee and sugar carrying the fair trade mark are readily available for our personal use and for our church kitchens. We can also seek out fair trade products, particularly important in the fashion industry. Transform Trade

(formerly Traidcraft Exchange) continues to challenge industry and government and needs our support to do so.

Never doubt that when we choose to buy a fair trade product as part of our weekly shopping, we create a drop that flows into the mighty stream of God's justice.

Hymn: Pray for a world where every child (StF 527)

Story: The battle for justice continues – a story from Colombia

Close to 2.5 million Venezuelans are living in Colombia, having fled due to their home country's political crisis and economic collapse. Jamiey, the National Coordinator for Migration for the Methodist Church in Colombia, works among Venezuelan migrant families in the coastal town of Santa Marta to help support the women and educate children. The children gather in a Chinese restaurant, owned by a community leader, where they are taught by a Venezuelan teacher. The owner provides the furniture, storage, and also feeds the children. The women are also taught courses in technological and communication skills, as well as jewellery-making and beauty.

The number of migrant families, together with the effects of climate change, has put a strain on the water supply. The Don Diego River supplies water for the whole town, which in normal times is sufficient, however, the largest coal mine in Colombia is taking water from the river. As a result, the water level has dropped, communities have been displaced, there is little water for irrigation and the people are only allowed to have water twice a week.

The injustice of the issue of the water supply still needs to be addressed, but because of the intervention of the Colombian Methodist Church, migrant women and their children now have a hope for their future.

For a video showing more on the battle for justice in Columbia go to: mwib.org.uk

Prayers of intercession

Loving God,

We hold before you the people in the stories we have just heard.

With hope, we reimagine this world as a better world where justice and love reign.

We pray for a fairer world, a world where peace and justice abound.

Let justice roll,

and may your kingdom come.

We pray for people who seek your will here on earth: those who strive for peace, campaign for justice, fight for the oppressed, the exploited, the under-privileged; those who seek to eliminate hunger and poverty.

Let justice roll,

and may your kingdom come.

We pray for people who have experienced a miscarriage of justice:

people who have been discriminated against unjustly,
people who have been falsely accused,
people who have been wrongfully imprisoned
or unfairly punished.

Let justice roll,
and may your kingdom come.

As we experience the results of climate change, we pray for people on whom it is having a devastating impact and for people who have been displaced. We give thanks for those people who have welcomed and offered hospitality, for those campaigning for climate justice.

Let justice roll,
and may your kingdom come.

As a justice-seeking Church, give us wisdom, integrity and dedication so that we may recognise where there are injustices. Help us to act upon them, always seeking your guidance.

Let justice roll,
and may your kingdom come. Amen.

Say together the **Lord's Prayer**, in the language of your heart.

Hymn: God has spoken (StF 157)

(Alt: Called by Christ StF 660)

During the singing of this hymn, people might be invited to bring forward their Easter Offering gifts for the World Mission Fund.

Dedication of Offering

We dedicate the offerings made to the Methodist World Mission Fund through this Easter Offering service.

Let us stand and say together:

Loving and gracious God, we bring the offerings for the work of the Methodist Church through its World Mission Fund. May the money be used to support where there is need, and to share your love which we know from the life of Jesus Christ, our Saviour. We pray for those who will share in the distribution of the funds, and for those who will be recipients, that each may learn more of your generous hospitality and love for all humankind. Amen.

Closing Remarks

We accomplish in our lifetime only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work. Nothing we do is complete, which is another way of saying that the kingdom always lies beyond us...

But we plant seeds that one day will grow.
We water seeds already planted,

knowing that they hold future promise.

We lay foundations that will need further development.

It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for the Lord's grace to enter and do the rest...

We are prophets of a future not our own.

(Ken Untener of Saginaw, a First Nation People of Michigan, USA)

Benediction

Loving God,

Renew our passion for justice.

Open our minds as we serve you in our daily lives.

May we see the world through your eyes,

may we listen with your ears.

Send us out with your love and purpose in our hearts to do your will,

to live and work for your kingdom and for your glory now and always.

Amen.



Methodist Women in Britain

for women, for justice, for Christ

mwib.org.uk



The **Methodist** Church

methodist.org.uk/global-relationships

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