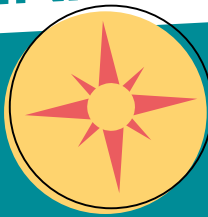


A JUSTICE-SEEKING CHURCH



A guide to the
2023 Methodist
Conference
report on the
**Walking with
Micah** project



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A Justice-seeking Church

A guide to the Methodist Conference report on the Walking with Micah project¹

The Methodist Conference adopted the report, A Justice-seeking Church, in 2023.

This guide introduces the report and offers some questions as a way of engaging with it, either individually or with a group.

The report reaffirms the Methodist Church's long-standing commitment to be a justice-seeking Church. It is for disciples seeking to live a Methodist Way of Life as well as those who lead within our Church. It seeks to encourage and resource churches in local communities that are longing for justice. It is written with the hope that it will assist our whole Connexion as we seek to prioritise the use of resources.

By adopting it, the Methodist Conference:

- adopted six **Principles for justice** that underpin our understanding of God's justice;
- agreed five **Priorities for justice** as a focus for the Church's action over the next five years;
- affirmed some **Practices for justice** to help improve what we do and how we do it.

This guide shares what we have to learn from our theology, our hymns, our past, our current practices and what matters to Methodist communities about justice, as well as introducing the **Principles, Priorities and Practices for justice**.

Further resources on specific parts of the report will be available soon.

The full report can be read (or heard) here: methodist.org.uk/Justice



¹ This guide is an edited version of the report agreed at the 2023 Methodist Conference.

How to use this guide

The Methodist Conference commended the **Justice-seeking Church** report to the Methodist Church for prayerful study and action throughout the Connexion. This guide offers one way to begin that engagement.



Each section introduces a chapter of the report, followed by a few questions. These can be used for personal reflection or as the basis for conversation in a small group.

For small groups:

- There will be various other group resources produced shortly, eg Bible studies on the **Principles for justice**, but this guide will be helpful for groups wanting to get to grips with the framework offered by the report and to think about how their church might start to engage with it. It is a starting point, not a roadmap.
- Copies of this guide can be ordered for every group member so it can be read before meeting together.
- If you are leading a group session of about 90 minutes, online or in person, begin with a prayer or a reflection, and then consider what is covered in each section, sharing anything that surprised you or that chimed with your understanding, before moving on to discuss the questions together.
- Particularly as you move through the report, use the time together as an opportunity to begin reflecting on your community, your church and your responses to injustice. Remember, this report offers a framework – of principles, priorities and practices – to understand, focus and deepen our lives as justice-seekers. It is not necessarily about doing more – it may even be about doing less. It also might be about doing things differently, and being changed ourselves in the process.
- At the end of each session capture any actions you have decided to follow up before meeting next time, and/or any questions you're going to find the answer to. Ask each person to share a word that describes how they feel at the end of the session. And then close with a prayer that offers everything to God.



The sections of this guide can be divided into sessions as follows, but you are invited to respond to the needs and pace of your group:

Session 1

What is justice like?

God's justice and the Methodist Church

Our changing world

Learning from British Methodist history

Learning from Methodist hymns

Session 2

Learning from the Bible and our theology

Learning from conversations

How does the Methodist Church seek justice?

Session 3

Principles for justice

Priorities for justice

Session 4

Practices for justice
ways of *doing*
ways of *being*

What might it look like to be a justice-seeking church?



Section One:

Listening and Learning

What is justice like?

So, let's begin. How do we experience justice and how do we go about seeking it?

Where there is God's justice...

““ ...it is so much bigger than simply fairness

““ ...people feel heard and their dignity is affirmed

““ ...power is shared and used to uphold truth and justice

““ ...there is enough for all, no one lives in poverty, in hunger, or is without

““ ...all creation flourishes, all is well

““ ...there is real peace

““ ...we get a sense of God's kingdom and God's purpose

““ ...there is joy and hope for the future

When there is a lack of justice...

““ ...we feel unseen and unheard

““ ...we do not feel we can make a difference

““ ...we are prevented from fully flourishing

““ ...our relationships with one another become damaged

““ ...trauma and disadvantage are transmitted through generations

““ ...the most vulnerable bear the heaviest burden

““ ...creation is treated as a commodity to be abused, not treasured



Seeking justice...

“ ...looks like praying, listening, speaking, acting, giving, relating, co-operating, resisting – and so much more

“ ...involves deep attentiveness to people who have experienced injustice

“ ...should inspire righteous anger, compassion, humility and hope

“ ...requires of us to think in terms of long-term transformation as well as short-term solutions

“ ...means making restitution where injustices have benefited us or others

“ ...is about doing what we can in our own context, and not being overwhelmed

“ ...is a vocation for everyone and requires a deep rootedness in God to sustain us

“ ...helps us to know God better as we are part of building God's kingdom



- What does justice or injustice look and feel like to you?
- How would you describe 'seeking justice'?

God's justice and the Methodist Church

*He 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)*

At a time of crisis, when Israel was under attack from the Assyrian Empire, the prophet Micah reminded God's people what God requires of them. God's call on us to act justly is not a separate command, but is inextricably interwoven with the calling to embody God's love in all that we do, and grow still closer to the perfect love and character of God. This invitation from the God of love and justice is at the heart of a Methodist Way of Life.

There are many debates, philosophical and political, about the meaning of justice. Our own experiences may mean that we interpret the word in particular ways, perhaps in terms of punishment or fairness.

The report, **A Justice-seeking Church**, begins, however, by rooting itself in God's justice. This justice is at the very heart of God: we see its richness and complexity in the Bible, and we catch glimpses of it even in the midst of deep injustice.

God's justice

There are a number of words which are translated as 'justice' in the Bible. *Tzedakah* (righteousness) is often thought of as 'charity', but is less about generosity and more about what it means to be part of a community of God's people. *Mishpat* (justice) relates to justice delivered as a judgement, and to the just society that is created from that judgement. God's judgement is called down with great joy because God is on the side of those who are labouring under injustice (Psalm 96). God's justice is seen in laws protecting strangers, in the prophets calling out injustice, in complex stories of liberation, healing and reconciliation. Jesus' death and resurrection showed that the alienation and injustices of the world do not have the last word, rather everyone is invited to participate in God's new kingdom of liberation, justice and joy.

God's perfect justice will always be beyond human endeavour. Whilst we seek to align ourselves to God's will as a Church committed to being justice-seeking, we recognise our ideas of justice will only ever be proximate to divine justice, and our human actions for justice will still be imperfect and insufficient.



Our Calling

The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission. A Methodist Way of Life is a rhythm of discipleship helping us put our response to this calling into practice, as individuals and communities. Amongst the commitments to worship, learning and caring, service and evangelism, we are encouraged to:

- help people in our communities and beyond
- care for creation and all God's gifts
- challenge injustice.

A Methodist Way of Life embodies our desire to be a growing, inclusive, justice-seeking and evangelistic Church. The Evangelism and Growth Strategy, *God for All*, makes clear that evangelism and justice are intertwined – a God whose character is just will shape the nature of the good news that we proclaim.

The gospel has to be both spoken and lived. The Gospels show that 'good news and good works are inseparable', and that to preach the kingdom of God involves a commitment to justice and peace. So although Christians may differ in their respective commitments to evangelism and social justice, the two tasks belong together. (Called to Love and Praise, The Methodist Conference, 1999)

The Methodist Church's commitment to justice-seeking is rooted in the development of our movement. From early Methodist involvement in justice for agricultural workers and an end to the slave trade, to more recent support for climate justice and an end to international debt, Methodists have often (though not unfailingly) sought to challenge injustice and bring about fairer and more just situations and structures.



Following the God of justice

Yet we fall short of what God desires for us. We have not always challenged injustice and we continue to participate in oppressive structures. Not all people have experienced just practices within our own churches, which has prompted the need for the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity strategy and a deep commitment to safeguarding practices. The Methodist Church's commitment to be *justice-seeking* holds in tension the eternal call to be just with our daily need for repentance for our own injustice.

A *Justice-seeking Church* is about discovering a new confidence in Methodist gifts and graces; allowing the laying down of some work to release resources, people and leaders; and offering a way ahead, following the God of justice.



- What are some of the different ways you notice God's justice in the Bible?
- How are justice and evangelism intertwined in your experience?

Our changing world

The last decade has seen enormous change in our society and around the world.

The Covid-19 pandemic resulted in over 200,000 deaths in the UK by the end of 2022 and shone a light on pre-existing health inequalities. Mortality was 2.6 times higher in the most deprived than the least deprived areas, and highest amongst Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Black Caribbean groups, and among people with a self-reported disability or a learning disability.² And whilst inspiring forms of community solidarity were evident through the pandemic, isolation, addiction, domestic violence and mental ill health also increased.

Following the financial crisis of 2008, significant reductions in public spending hit the poorest hardest, leading to an increase in child poverty and a fall in life expectancy amongst the worst off in certain parts of the country. The pandemic, together with Russia's war on Ukraine, added to inflationary pressures and a rise in international energy prices. Here, significant rises in fuel and food prices have contributed to a widespread cost of living crisis. People are increasingly turning to foodbanks, and churches and community groups have been running Warm Welcome spaces for people unable to afford to eat and heat their homes. The current cost of living crisis is not new for many people, but has tipped them over into even deeper catastrophe.

Two key political referendums, on Scottish independence and Brexit, were held within a few years of each other. Both issues remain intensely contested and demonstrate deeper fractures and polarisation in society. Many people from minority ethnic groups reported an increase in abuse and hate speech after the Brexit vote. Negotiations to untangle UK and EU relationships are still continuing.

Internationally, the last decade has seen sea levels rise and an increase in flooding, heatwaves, droughts and other extreme weather events. The poorest are experiencing the biggest impact of the climate crisis. The world is set to emit enough carbon to exceed the 1.5°C global warming target within the next 10 years, with the planet's average temperature on a trajectory to reach 2.5°C above pre-industrial levels by the end of the century. Urgent and radical action is needed to tackle the climate crisis, biodiversity loss and environmental destruction.

In East Africa, the worst drought in 40 years has been exacerbated by rocketing global food prices, placing 22 million people at risk of starvation. At the end of 2021, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that 89.3 million people were forcibly displaced as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public order.



² kingsfund.org.uk/publications/deaths-covid-19, accessed 6 March 2023
researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/CBP-9309/CBP-9309.pdf, accessed 6 March 2023

The war in Ukraine has led to the largest movement of refugees in Europe since the Second World War. This has added pressure to an already struggling international refugee protection system, but has also raised questions about how different groups of refugees are treated.

The #MeToo movement showed the ongoing injustices of misogyny and violence against women and girls. LGBTQI+ people still experience discrimination and victimisation. Racist violence in this country and the US, as well as evidence of ongoing systemic problems in policing, education, health and maternity care, has shone a light on the need to confront racism in society and to act on the legacies of slavery and colonialism.

Such a description of our times can be overwhelming, as we feel buffeted on every side, witnessing or experiencing great need, injustice and oppression. Yet we are reminded by Paul, *“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good”* (Romans 12:21). At a time of such change and great pressures, it is important to take stock, to stand back and discern what God is calling us to do.



- Can you name other key local, national or global events over the past decade?
- How has your community changed over this time?
- In addition to the increased pressures, what changes have you seen for good?

Learning from British Methodist history

Learning from the past is important but never straightforward. Within British Methodist history there have been high points of altruism, humility and action for change. There have also been low points of misjudgement, apathy, compromise, colonialism and deliberate fault.

Yet there are some threads which run through Methodist history in Britain that may inform, inspire and warn us, helping us understand what is important today, and that tell the story of God's love for all people.

A commitment to the poorest

Early Methodism was socially diverse but working people made up the largest group. John Wesley encouraged Methodist societies not only to give to those in need, but also to befriend those experiencing poverty, to understand their story and to challenge the attitudes and economic structures that kept people in poverty. This commitment was seen in the witness of the Primitive Methodists and in the work of the Forward movement in city and town centres. The Wesley Deaconess Order combined social action and evangelism, particularly amongst those at the economic margins. Action for Children, All We Can and Methodist Homes (MHA) were all established as Methodist responses to poverty in different contexts. The Mission Alongside the Poor Affirmation in 1983 stated: *"The Methodist Church, faithful to its missionary calling to evangelism, social caring and political justice, will strive to use its resources for all in society, recognising that this will mean especially taking sides with the poor and disadvantaged."*

Building relationships

Wesley commented in his sermon 'On Visiting the Sick' that *"One great reason why the rich in general have so little sympathy for the poor is because they so seldom visit them"* and told rich followers that they couldn't be faithful to Christ unless they spent time with the poorest amongst them. In the twentieth century, Sybil Phoenix exemplified community-led justice work, setting up the Moonshot youth club for young Black people, with classes, a library, dances and a football team, as well as support for young mothers. When the club was burnt down by the National Front, she rebuilt it, later beginning the first anti-racist training for Methodist Church leaders. More recently All We Can have modelled a radical partnership approach when working with local organisations for relief and development.



Leadership from the margins

Wesley's emphasis on everyone being a child of God gave individuals a true sense of their value: we are not worthless, even if society judges us to be so. This is transformational. Methodism equipped many people to resist injustices by providing education and nurturing self-worth, strong belief and sometimes righteous anger. Nineteenth-century agricultural labourers, for example, learned to speak out and lead in church, and were able to assert their need for a living wage, leading to the founding of the trade union movement. Tommy Hepburn, leader of the first miners' strike in Durham, and Ellen Wilkinson, one of the first women MPs for the Labour Party, were both nurtured as Methodists. Such leadership often came at a personal cost, particularly for people from the working classes.

Liberation for all

Charles Wesley's words, "*My chains fell off, my heart was free*", described his conversion experience in the language of liberation. For many early Methodists, this promised liberation was from the oppression of the spirit, the body and the mind. In the nineteenth century, the Revd Hugh Price Hughes of the West London Mission was at the forefront of both the temperance movement, seeking to liberate people from addiction and poverty, and calls to repeal the Contagious Diseases Act, which sought the liberation of women from abuse and oppression. John Wesley famously condemned the horrors of slavery, and also said that if the capitalist economy relied on slavery, it was better to abolish the Empire's wealth than to keep slavery. Methodists, both ordained and lay, and of both African and European heritage, took part in resistance to slavery in the Caribbean and the Americas. Methodists in other countries were influential in political liberation movements and the development of liberation theology.

Prophetic witness

Methodism has a tradition of nurturing prophetic groups and individuals who have challenged injustice within the Church and society. It has acted in solidarity with others, for example in boycotting South African goods, beginning Racial Justice Sunday after the murder of Stephen Lawrence, campaigning to 'Make Poverty History' and promoting fair trade. Methodists have led campaigns until others could join, for example in exposing the scandalous impact of benefit sanctions particularly on disabled people. This tradition of prophetic witness, which goes back to the Tolpuddle Martyrs, continues through groups such as the Network of Methodist Activists and in the treasured stories of past resistance that can still inspire us today.



Recognising and learning from our Church's part in injustices

We have also begun to acknowledge our failings as a Church where we have got it very wrong. Some of our churches were unreceptive and even hostile to the Windrush generation, many of whom came to worship only to be turned away. We have recognised and confessed the failure of the Church to keep people safe from abuse. Furthermore, we have not always been a prophetic counter-cultural voice: the ten years following the 2011 Conference statement, *Hope in God's Future*, saw too little progress on urgent climate action in churches. The Methodist Church has been humbled by the generosity of many of those directly affected but also needs to hear their anger and frustration when recognising and learning from our Church's part in injustices. Through the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity work, our Church is beginning to recognise the damage done and to create a truly inclusive culture. Steps are being taken to face the legacies of slavery in our institution and decolonise our work with global partners. At our best, we can face the truths of failures because we believe in a God of truth and grace, as well as a God of justice.

Though too often belated, our recognition of the Church's participation in injustice helps to remind us of what we bring from our heritage – and will help in discerning what is ours to do in the future.



- > What stories of action for justice are important to you and why?
- > What can we learn from them today?

Learning from Methodist hymns

As a people 'born in song', we are both formed by the hymns we sing, but also see changes in our understanding reflected in the collections of hymns we authorise for use in Methodist churches.

The notion of justice in our hymnody reaches back to the influential 1780 hymn book, *Hymns for the use of the People called Methodist*. Picking up Micah 6:8, Charles Wesley writes:

*Whoe'er to thee themselves approve,
Must take the path thy word hath show'd;
Justice pursue, and mercy love,
And humbly walk by faith with God.* (Hymn 127)

However, this defining hymn book of the early Methodist movement is structured around the idea of personal salvation and offers hymns for the stages on the journey of faith. Although the word 'justice' appears in a number of hymns, it usually refers to God's divine law or final judgement. The word 'righteousness' – a recurring theme in Charles' hymns – tends to mean God's gracious putting right of our individual wrongdoings, another term for personal salvation. Social justice, though sought by the Wesleys in their ministry, is not a noticeable feature of these hymns. On the other hand, there are some hymns that nonetheless talk about the reign of God's kingdom in terms of improvements to our common life.

Singing of God's justice

Over the twentieth and especially into the twenty-first century, the notion of social justice has become more prominent in our hymn books, drawing on a wide range of hymns and songs from communities such as Iona, as well as from Methodist writers. *Singing the Faith* placed 30 hymns and songs on themes of justice and peace in a section entitled 'Of God's Enduring Purposes'. Here, God is described as standing beside those experiencing injustice. Graham Kendrick's song 'Beauty for brokenness' (*StF* 693) portrays God alongside the poor and calls on God to: "give us compassion we pray, melt our cold hearts". The justice spoken of in this hymn is linked to the fulfilment of God's salvation, but the implication is that God's kingdom stands in sharp contrast to the fragility of life for many people, experienced through unemployment, dispossession and conflict.



Some hymns do, however, assume that the singers themselves have not experienced injustice, eg 'I will speak out for those who have no voices' (StF 702). This can lead to divisive 'us' and 'them' language and sentiments, even excluding some people from being able to sing particular hymns, particularly about poverty.

The addition to *Hymns & Psalms* and *Singing the Faith* of material from the global Church has, however, added emphases of confidence, hope, determination and joy to hymns of justice.

Overall, through our Methodist hymn books there is a growing theme of Christian disciples called into partnership with God in seeking justice. This is expressed in the way of life to which we are called as individuals and together.

*Show me how to stand for justice:
How to work for what is right,
How to challenge false assumptions,
How to walk within the light.
May I learn to share more freely
in a world so full of greed,
showing your immense compassion
by the life I choose to lead. (StF 713)*



- Which hymns speak to you about God's justice and why?
- Are there hymns about God's justice which you find more challenging – again why is this?

Learning from the Bible and our theology

One of the most fundamental ways in which we understand God's nature is as love. Justice is the outworking of love in the public domain and so justice is an expression of God's nature. Justice characterises God's interaction with God's world and God's people. God's justice may not always be comfortable, and humans may not always have fully recognised, followed or understood it, yet we are still called ever closer to God's just nature.

These are some of the theological approaches that can contribute to a theology of justice:

- **A Creation-based approach** shows a vision of justice where all is held in a godly balance in a world that is good. Justice is done when we love, appreciate and care for creation as God's precious gift. It extends beyond the human, calling us to a responsible and caring relationship of interdependence with the whole created order. A just society is one in which the image of God is recognised in all people, and all are treated as such.
- **An Incarnation-based approach** reminds us that God was fully present in the person of Jesus Christ, and chooses to be present through the followers of Christ in the messiness of everyday life. Justice may be present when we all give of ourselves freely for others, surrendering the privilege that we hold, and when the imbalance of power which leads to injustice gives way to a commitment to the good of the other. Paradoxically, this self-emptying leads to a society in which all can be fulfilled. Mary sings that God *"has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly"* (Luke 1:52).
- **A Salvation-based approach** shows justice being shaped by the Cross. Evil will not be victorious, and there is new life for all things in Jesus. Justice is liberation, seeking to overcome exploitation and inequality, but also the subtler forms of oppression that limit people's ability to shape and live their lives freely. It emerges into the light, reborn and renewed, but, like the risen Christ, those who have fought for justice will bear the scars.
- **A Kingdom-based approach** suggests there is another way of being, where God's kingdom comes and God's will is done. The Bible bears witness to this in the life of Israel, the ministry of Jesus and in the life of the Early Church, but also to the damage done where this is not the case. Justice is inherently relational and community-based and reflects *koinonia*, the deep and loving fellowship that is made possible through the Holy Spirit.

In our theological reflections on justice, we will often draw on more than one of these approaches.



Justice as Our Calling

If justice finds its source in our understanding of God, particularly as seen in the ministry of Jesus Christ, then it must surely be a part of Our Calling as God's people.

Discipleship is about learning to be more Christ-like, so we cannot avoid the task of seeking to be more just. To believe in a just God is to believe in justice as godliness, and to believe is to act. James declares that "*faith without works is dead*" (James 2:26) as a summary of a much longer call to let justice and love characterise our community of faith.

Justice describes the way in which God relates to us, so it must also be central to how we relate to God (**worship**) and to one another (**learning and caring**), to how we are Christ-like in the world (**service**), and indeed to the very nature of the good news that we proclaim (**evangelism**).

Justice is not an optional add-on, or a piece of work that we can delegate to a committee, but is central to what it means to be a disciple.

A Methodist theology of justice-seeking

If justice is an outworking of love, and love is the nature of God, then to be Christian must be to seek justice. Perhaps there is a distinctively – although not uniquely – Methodist theological approach to seeking justice.

This involves looking at understandings of justice through the lens of what is sometimes called the 'quadrilateral' of Scripture, experience, reason, and tradition, along with the particular Methodist emphasis on holiness.

Methodism places considerable value on the ideas of **holiness**. For John Wesley holiness is about a fullness of love for God and for neighbour. The Bible shows us a God who is intimately connected with, and concerned for, God's creation – a God who takes an interest in the orphan and the widow, who is concerned for the stranger, and who actually chose to live as part of creation, in Jesus, who was not afraid to get his holy hands dirty, before nails were driven through them. And we are called to be holy, just as God is holy. For Methodists, holiness is intertwined with an understanding of justice.

Methodists have historically placed a considerable emphasis on **experience** in theology. In practice we may be more aware of experiences of *injustice*, when God's rule is *not* experienced, when situations are unfair or oppressive. Perhaps if we are oblivious to injustices, we need to be made painfully, deeply aware of them. Then we will be ready to join the struggle for justice, not because we think we should, but because we simply cannot bear the injustice.



But what if we are not the ones experiencing injustice? How, then, are we to reach the point of lament and the urge for justice? The answer must involve a great deal of careful listening and empathy. This can be difficult and uncomfortable, but may drive us to repentance, to lament and thus to action, and so our discipleship may be enriched.

We turn to **Scripture** in order to make sense of what we have experienced, to allow Scripture to read our experience and challenge it. The scriptural potential for a reflection on justice is vast and complex, but it is not a separate category. The Bible describes the experience of God's people in seeking – and often failing – to live according to God's justice, and the biblical witness shapes our theology and our interpretation of our experience.

Yet it is also important to note that the Bible does not present one uniform picture of justice. We often turn to the prophets for a call to justice, but what are we to do with the cry of desperation at the end of Psalm 137, where the heartbroken, exiled Hebrews can find no other way to express their experience of injustice than by longing for the destruction of even the babies of their oppressors? Justice can appear very different from different perspectives.

We naturally find ourselves applying **reason** to determine the underlying principles of justice and how they appear, or are missing, in our lives and communities today. Reflecting individually and together on experiences and the experiences of others, we seek to include the widest possible range of voices. As with the biblical narrative, justice looks different from different perspectives. The act of conferring allows us to discern together how and where to prioritise our focus as a justice-seeking church. It allows us to respond to injustice at a very local level, within each community and context, and to work with our Partner Churches around the world to challenge oppression and injustice internationally and globally. This does not, however, release us from the obligation to identify and challenge injustice as individuals, nor to examine our own lives for those attitudes and actions that deny the image of God in our neighbours.

As we reflect together on our experience and interpret the Bible with each other, we build on that collective experience that we call **tradition**. We stand in a tradition of seeking justice and equality; this is seen in our history and dissenting traditions, our hymnody, our preaching, our Wesleyan heritage and doctrines. There is much here of which we can be rightly proud, but again we need to be attentive to the widest possible range of voices.



The traditions and history of other parts of the global Methodist and other Christian communities, as well as non-Christian communities, have also shaped our own traditions. The development of liberationist approaches to theology have enabled a deeper understanding, bringing the perspectives of marginalised communities to theological interpretation. Attention to these perspectives helps us to understand where we may still collude with inequality, injustice and oppression.

All of this requires a collective process of listening. We need to hear those whose experience of injustice is not ours; the reasoning of those whose understanding of justice is not ours; interpretations of Scripture that challenge our own reading; and the perspectives of those shaped in different traditions from ours. The search for justice is not tidy, and a theology of justice is therefore hard to systematise. Rather, we weave together the various theological strands in ever new ways, for new situations, as we listen to and confer with one another.



- What different pictures of God's justice do you see in the Bible?
- Which ones particularly speak to your experience?
- How do our understandings of God's justice shape the good news we share?

Learning from conversations

Many people contributed to this report through taking part in **Justice Conversations**.

Across the Connexion, people were invited to consider together three questions:

1. Imagine a fair, more equal and life-bringing society and world... what does that look like?
2. What's the biggest obstacle to such a just world?
3. What is the most important step in making this a reality?

Church groups, schools, children and young people, and community groups took part, as did some synods and young people at 3Generate.

Many churches holding Justice Conversations were active for justice. Two thirds of the churches that took part were involved in foodbanks, and a third supported refugees, fair trade or community campaigns. This was despite Covid-19 changing or pausing the activities undertaken by many churches.

Groups with personal experiences of injustice were also invited to hold panels or discussions, and fed back their perspective, for example on poverty, youth, racial injustice, disability and gender. There was input from global Partner Churches, and from a range of Methodist organisations and networks.

A number of interrelated themes emerged of people's images of a just world and their priorities for action. These were tested in workshops at the Methodist Conference in 2022.

The aim throughout has been to listen to a wide range of voices and to discern what could help us be a better justice-seeking church. These conversations have shaped the **Principles** and **Priorities for justice** proposed in later sections and have also given an insight into how our Church practises justice-seeking.



What does a just world look like?

Some of the interrelated themes emerging from the Justice Conversations:



➤ Look at the **Justice Conversation** questions on page 22 – what themes emerge for you?

Resources for groups to explore these questions together are available at methodist.org.uk/Justice

How does the Methodist Church seek justice?

How does the Methodist Church in Britain seek justice in practice? The answer is: in so many ways!

Methodism acts, speaks, funds, works, learns and prays for and about many justice issues. Most of this happens locally through individuals, groups or churches, with some resourcing, support and representation from the wider Connexion.

For simplicity, current Methodist justice work is outlined below under three broad headings – speaking, funding and acting.

Speaking for justice

This is undertaken most prominently by the President and Vice-President on behalf of the Methodist Conference. The Methodist Conference, as the governing body of the Methodist Church, confers to discern the will of God and adopts statements, receives reports, passes resolutions and initiates action on a huge range of justice issues. The Presidency is the Church's principal representative on urgent issues of justice. 3Generate has regularly exercised its prophetic voice in highlighting justice issues on behalf of children and young people, including the environment, homelessness, Black Lives Matter, and poverty in the UK.

Preachers speak for justice as they engage with the Bible and the world on a weekly basis in preparation for leading worship. Social media has enabled Methodists to speak for justice across a broad and public platform, with many individuals finding other ways to speak to the local media or to decision-makers about issues of concern too.



Funding for justice

Funding happens globally, connexionally and locally:

- **Globally** – The World Mission Fund (WMF) finances projects and work overseas in cooperation with the Methodist Church in Britain’s global Partner Churches and organisations. In addition, the Methodist Church regularly fundraises for areas of high need in response to events around the world, often jointly with All We Can.
- **Connexionally** – Every circuit and district in the Connexion has been allocated Mission in Britain (MiB) funds for New Places for New People (NPNP) projects, at least 60 per cent of which across the Connexion will be used for Church at the Margins projects to nurture new Christian communities and leadership amongst economically marginalised people in new places.
- **Locally** – £250,000 of Methodist Action on Poverty and Justice (MAPJ) funding, which comes from the MiB Fund, is distributed to the districts each year, along with money from District Advance Funds.

Acting for justice

Connexional support for local action is provided in a number of ways. The Methodist Church works through the ecumenical Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT), in close partnership with the Baptist Union and United Reformed Church, with the Church of Scotland as an associate partner, to act together for peace and justice. JPIT supports churches and individuals in listening to, learning, praying, speaking about, and acting on public policy issues. The Children, Youth and Families team encourages activism, volunteering, campaigning, peace-making and project-starting amongst children and young people. In addition, short-term Connexional projects respond to identified need, such as funding the global youth campaign for COP26, and partnering with Citizens UK to support the Communities for Ukraine programme. Justice is also woven into work across the Methodist Church, including the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity Strategy, *God for All*, Rural Mission and Ministry, the aims and purpose of 3Generate, the work of safeguarding, the Action for Hope Strategy, the ethical investment work of the Central Finance Board and in many other ways.

In addition, groups such as Methodist Women in Britain, the Methodist Activist Network and the Methodist Peace Fellowship enable action for justice locally and globally, as do charities such as All We Can, Action for Children and Methodist Homes which have Methodist roots.



Locally, churches, circuits and districts undertake justice work tailored to their own contexts and are funded locally too. The areas of work that many churches are involved in include hosting foodbanks or pantries and debt advice centres; supporting people facing homelessness, drug addiction, poverty or discrimination; becoming EcoChurches or Churches of Sanctuary; hosting election hustings meetings; or being involved in campaigning or community organising groups. Methodist people are often involved in justice work beyond their church community, including in paid employment or voluntary work. The role of churches in inspiring such work through preaching or upholding it in prayer is crucial.

Yet churches also face challenges in being justice-seeking presences in communities, eg a shortage of funding or volunteers. Many of these challenges are shared with other voluntary organisations. There is a sense that there are fewer people within our churches able to engage with certain forms of justice-seeking and action, and, as the demographics of churches have become more middle class, they are more disconnected from the needs of their communities. For those who are engaging, there is a risk of being overwhelmed by the breadth and depth of injustices. In the wake of the pandemic, many congregations are trying to discern how to hold on to the treasures of the past, to set aside the things which no longer work, and to be open to new ways of seeking justice and peace.

But local churches are still often an enduring presence within communities, sustained by prayer and spirituality, and part of a wider diverse family. They know that seeking transformation and justice can be complex, and requires persistence and often small steps. Christian discipleship includes the call to be a prophetic community: a people who recognise the reality of the world as it is, and who yet look towards, and invite others to look towards, the world as it should be.



- How are you or your local church engaged in seeking justice?
- What challenges do you face?
- What strengths or gifts do you bring?

Section Two:

Principles, Priorities and Practices for justice

Having reflected on what we have heard from our history, our theology and our hymns, as well as what is happening in our world and in our churches, the Methodist Conference adopted the following **Principles, Priorities** and **Practices** for justice as a framework for the Methodist Church's justice-seeking work.

Principles for justice

The **Principles for justice**, adopted by the Methodist Conference, are anchored in what we know of our just God, and suggest what it means for us to be justice-seeking.

Many Christian Churches have a tradition of social principles or a body of theological teaching on justice.

The Catholic Church, for example, has a body of Catholic Social Teaching summarised as: dignity; solidarity; the common good; the option for the poor; peace; care for creation; and the dignity of work and participation.

The 'Five Marks of Mission', used by many Anglican Churches, includes *"To respond to human need by loving service"*, *"To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation"* and *"To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth"*.

The United Methodist Church, a worldwide Methodist Church based in the United States of America, has a series of Social Principles, with detailed position statements, speaking *"to the human issues in the contemporary world from a sound biblical and theological foundation ... They are a call to faithfulness and are intended to be instructive and persuasive in the best of the prophetic spirit."*

The British Methodist Conference has made theological statements related to specific social or justice issues, and from these have been developed positions or activities.

The **Principles for justice** are different. These Principles offer a description of what underpins our beliefs, for us as Methodists, about a God of justice. Each is followed by what this principle means for us if we are to be justice-seeking. Whilst these Principles will be recognised by many Christians, they are proposed humbly as emerging from our own reception of Scripture, experience, tradition and reason.



The six **Principles for justice** are:

1

God made humans in the image of God, each worthy of equal value and dignity. *The search for justice entails treating others with respect, and may involve reclaiming lost worth.*

2

God desires the flourishing of creation and human community within it. *The search for justice does not diminish or limit the flourishing of others but seeks to enable it.*

3

God consistently shows a bias to people experiencing poverty and those who are excluded. *The search for justice must attend to those who live in poverty, and those who are marginalised in other ways, as a priority.*

4

God entrusts those in power with a special responsibility for upholding justice. *Those seeking justice will encourage and challenge those with power to fulfil their vocation.*

5

God calls all people and nations actively to work for peace and justice, liberation and transformation. *It is never just someone else's responsibility. We all have a part to play.*

6

God calls us to live in hope and in ways that reflect God's character and the pattern of God's kingdom. *Thus, seeking justice involves honesty and truth, and may demand protest and resistance, restitution, forgiveness, reconciliation and ultimately transformation.*



What are the Principles for?

The **hope** behind these Principles is three-fold:

1. In turbulent times, these Principles are anchored in what we understand of God's just character. They are not a panacea, telling us everything we need to think or know in every situation. They do not mean that we no longer need to think, pray, or confer with each other. Instead the Principles are a powerful expression of what keeps us rooted as we wrestle with situations of injustice.
2. The hope is that these Principles will help us to articulate our call to be justice-seeking, both inside and beyond the Methodist Church, in ways that are clear and compelling.
3. The Principles can be tools to support discernment, individually and collectively, as we continually face new challenges of injustice. They will be a resource for us – as members, as Church leaders, as groups such as JPIT or the Central Finance Board – when we are called to respond in word or action to specific issues.

There may be times when one of the Principles might speak more to us than others. However, they should not be cherry-picked. Instead they should work in dialogue one with another, and that interaction should help us to go deeper.

Above all the Principles are not to be received passively. They are for us to work out in community with each other, together, through our discipleship and discernment, as part of our vocation for justice in this time and place. Our engagement with the Principles comprises part of our accountability to each other as well as to God.

Whilst Methodists will sometimes hold opposing positions on how issues of injustice should be understood or resolved, this doesn't mean that every position is acceptable, nor that just because an issue is complex we are required to be neutral about it. The Methodist Conference has stated, for example, that *"racism is a denial of the gospel"*. There will be some positions that cross *"the limits of acceptable political ideology, beyond which Christian sympathy must be withdrawn because our understanding of God is contradicted (eg apartheid, or the National Front)."* The Principles will help in the identification of ideologies, policies or behaviours that are unacceptable. In the end we must recall that, however earnest, our efforts for justice will only ever be human and a proximate picture of God's justice.

At the core of these Principles is God's **love**. John Wesley recognised that love was the most important gift and motivator. In his sermon 'Catholic Spirit' he wrote, *"Though we cannot think alike, may we not love alike? May we not be of one heart, though we are not of one opinion? Without all doubt, we may."*

Adopting these Principles does not mean that Methodists will all have to agree on each issue or vote the same way in every election. But we can be united in the acceptance of the Principles, even if we do not yet fully agree over their application.



Going deeper with the Principles

God made humans in the image of God, each worthy of equal value and dignity.

The search for justice entails treating others with respect, and may involve reclaiming lost worth.

From the very beginning, the 'image of God' is embedded into the biblical story as a key way of describing human identity. Diversity is an inherent part of this identity; it is not a particular people, gender, ability, ethnicity or social status that is created to bear the divine image, but all humankind.

Recognising God's image in all humans requires us to treat all people with equal and utmost dignity and value.

Anything else is a distortion of our relationship with God, and is what we call 'sin'. Elevating some people is idolatry (we are recasting God in the image of some people) and reducing others to a lesser status is treating God's image as unworthy of respect (and therefore we are failing to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and strength).

In Jesus, we see the truest image of God, remaining faithful to that image and recognising it in others who the world considered worthless. And we see Jesus treated as of no worth, executed in pain and humiliation on the Cross, yet through the Cross we see God's ultimate defeat of that which is evil and the promise of new life and new creation. Through loving our neighbour as ourselves, the image of God can be seen more clearly in us, and our worth can be restored.

Further Bible study material is planned to enable groups to study these Principles in greater depth.



Creation is intrinsically good and God delights in it. People are 'made for each other' yet this cannot occur without the wider flourishing of the interdependent created order that includes all living things and the global ecosystem. Creation's beauty, diversity, complexity and variety of species are consequences of its flourishing, not the goal of it. All living things are one whole, and the destruction of one part (a habitat or a species) will often have serious implications for many others, in often unforeseeable ways.

Flourishing means the development of one's potential and capabilities, the greatest use of the gifts we are all given. It is about having enough in order to thrive; the ability to live a good life, one that is meaningful and satisfying. It is not the same as the freedom to do whatever one likes. The flourishing of creation describes a situation in which the present and future of human beings and all living things are secured, in ways that respect the delicate balance between creature and environment. Flourishing is about exploring and co-creating God's world, and discovering these to be satisfying and enriching experiences. The waste or exploitation of God's gifts is not only sin against God, therefore, but represents an injustice against others.

Justice, flourishing and diversity are all linked. In practice, however, we will always wrestle with competing priorities due to scarcity, but in the search for justice we should always guard against the creation of injustices elsewhere. Justice will always enhance flourishing. It may place constraints on certain activities, but only on those that create unjust outcomes and thus would restrict the flourishing of others: neighbours and strangers in the future as well as the present.

God desires the flourishing of creation and human community within it.

The search for justice does not diminish or limit the flourishing of others but seeks to enable it.



God consistently shows a bias to people experiencing poverty and those who are excluded. *The search for justice must attend to those who live in poverty, and those who are marginalised in other ways, as a priority.*

God's love is infinite, so it is meaningless to compare God's love between peoples. The Bible reveals how God wants us to live together in God-centred, justice-focused communities. In a world which is skewed towards those with wealth and silences those in poverty, God therefore requires us to share God's greater attention to those in poverty.

The instruction to care for widows, aliens and orphans sits alongside teaching about debt relief and tithing to relieve poverty. The prophets condemn behaviours which abuse power and encourage their communities to develop their own strategies to resist oppression. The New Testament picks up the same themes. John the Baptist advocates radical sharing with "the poor", Paul encourages his congregations to give generously to his collection for those in need, and James heavily criticises those who treat rich visitors differently from poor ones. The Gospels remind us that Jesus was not born with wealth or status. He insists that people use their resources to benefit others in need and envisions banquets where the guests are the most marginalised. The so-called 'prosperity Gospel' is damaging precisely because it denies God's essential freedom to bless creation independently of anything we do.

Conversation about biblical models of justice is enriched by people who have experienced injustice in their own lives. Alongside this, there is a fresh recognition of diversity in the voices of the Bible itself. In *Other ways of reading: African women and the Bible*, Tswana theologian Musa W. Dube retells the story of the woman with the flow of blood as Mama Africa, racked by HIV, calling out to Jesus for healing. Native American theologian Laura Donaldson writes about Ruth's sister-in-law Orpah as a role-model for her community, choosing to remain with her own traditions rather than assimilating to an alternative culture.

The Bible challenges structural injustice, reflected in its critique of kings and their leadership and in its ambivalence around empire. This takes contemporary readers far beyond a concern for individual acts of charity, as Christians seek directly to act against systemic injustice. It is a biblical imperative to steward creation and to respond by addressing the structural injustice that has brought about the climate crisis. We push back against dehumanising treatment of refugees or trafficked individuals because of Scripture's teaching that all people are made in God's image. Core biblical emphases insist that we challenge injustice in our society as well as in our individual relationships.

Intrinsically power is neutral; what matters is how power is used and its effects. The misuse of power throughout history has caused incalculable suffering, and sadly continues to do so today.

The powerful, whether individuals or groups, have a greater capacity and responsibility to make a difference to people's lives and the systems we live under. Power is often embodied in systems, structures and cultures and this brings particular responsibilities and challenges. But all share the responsibility in establishing justice.

The biblical account shows clearly the expectation of the good ruler, the one who has legitimate power over others. There are prophetic warnings against corrupt rulers who fail to be good shepherds to the people. David was a shepherd-king, yet his actions involving Bathsheba also display the corrupting aspect of power.

Jesus shows a radically different approach to the use of power through trust in God that shows, through love, how power can be liberating. He resists temptations to dominate and enables freedom through his healings, attention to the marginalised and, most of all, through his death and resurrection.

The powerful are sometimes unaware of their powers or the impact of their actions upon others. Power distorts perspectives and the powerful therefore require a humility of heart and mind and a willingness to be challenged by those with less power, so that the justice becomes the product of co-creation rather than paternalism. In the pursuit of justice, power works best when shared but because it is often contested, there needs to be a preferential option for those with less power.

Power must not be abdicated through a reluctance to accept responsibility. The avoidance of power – through timidity or sloth – is just as much sin as is its improper use. The pursuit of justice, like love, is the task of everyone irrespective of status.

Martin Luther King put it this way:

Power ... is the ability to achieve purpose ... In this sense power is not only desirable but necessary to implement the demands of love and justice ... Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice. (Where Do We Go From Here: Chaos or Community?, 1967)

God entrusts those with power with a special responsibility for upholding justice.
Those seeking justice will encourage and challenge those with power to fulfil their vocation.



God calls all people and nations actively to work for peace and justice. *It is never just someone else's responsibility. We all have a part to play.*

If one of God's defining characteristics is justice, then this is a quality every person made in the image of God shares, and can develop as they are transformed into the likeness of God. Jesus came to bring freedom and abundance of life for all through the life-giving Holy Spirit. Christian identity thus has a strand of active commitment to justice woven through it.

Age, culture, gender, ethnicity and ability, among other factors, make people different and may give different perspectives and experiences of justice. Collaboration and solidarity between people who come from different places but seek complementary outcomes in building just societies can be very powerful. This is likely to entail giving preference to voices speaking from experiences of acute injustice. There is no room to privilege the stance or choices of people with better access to resources. Nor is it acceptable to work for the 'easy peace' which colludes with injustice.

Baptism brings a transformative self-understanding: *"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 3:28). The vision of collective responsibility for justice is both enriched and complicated by differing ideas within Christian tradition of what justice looks like for individuals, communities and nations. Despite possible tensions, there is capacity for renewal, transformation and liberation when Christians work together, and seek to work with those of other faiths, to resolve conflict through collaborative approaches, respecting the views of others and giving particular attention to voices from the margins.

God calls us to live in hope and in ways that reflect God's character and the pattern of God's kingdom. *Thus, seeking justice involves honesty and truth, and may demand protest and resistance, restitution, forgiveness, reconciliation and ultimately transformation.*

The pursuit of justice begins with God; justice is both God's work and God's very nature, and we are invited to participate in it. This means that seeking justice is both an imperative and a privilege for those who would seek to live according to God's ways.

God's Word became flesh in Jesus, who turned the world's upside down values the right way up again, proclaiming a kingdom where the powerful are to act as servants to the powerless, those who are usually ignored are listened to and given agency, and relationships are healed.

We are invited to speak God's word, but more than that, to be "*doers of the word, and not merely hearers*" (James 1:22). But further, we are called not just to deeds, but to a way of life – we must not simply refrain from unjust acts but actively to seek peace and pursue it, in all our encounters, in our attitudes, and in our participation in the proclamation and enactment of the kingdom.

We, too, are called to live in ways that upend the accepted values of the world. If we – as individuals or as members of institutions – have power, we are called to use it to serve; if we hold power unjustly, we are called to repent; if we benefit where historic injustice lingers in modern inequality, we are called to make restitution; and if our actions have caused or perpetuated injustice, we are called to listen carefully to uncomfortable truths, and to respond with humility.

In moving beyond deeds to a way of life that is oriented towards the hope of a new heaven and earth, we recognise that seeking justice is not about one-off acts of goodness, but about our whole attitude, as we seek to become more Christ-like. And, because we will inevitably get it wrong at times, it is about constantly learning, trying again and, in seeking justice, seeking also our own transformation.



- Which of these **Principles for justice** speaks most to you and why?
- Think of a current issue of injustice – how might one or more of the Principles help you to think more deeply about God's justice in this situation?

Priorities for justice

The **Priorities for justice** are intended to offer a focus for the Methodist Church in our commitment to seeking the transformation of the world.

These have emerged from reflecting on conversations with Methodists (including global partners), people experiencing injustice, and Methodist and other organisations, as well as reflecting on the Bible, our hymns and our past. The consideration of the gifts, strengths and opportunities we have now, as well as our limitations, leads us to focus on 'what is ours to do'. Sometimes what is 'ours to do' may be 'ours' as a local church; at other times it may be 'ours' as a district or as the Connexional Team. But, being connexional, we do it in each case on behalf of the whole Church.

Having Priorities does not mean that local communities should not identify other local concerns or that the Methodist Church cannot respond to emerging or urgent issues. Indeed both of these will need to sit alongside longer term work on Priorities if the Church is faithfully to seek justice. But amidst growing demands and shrinking resources, we seek to focus our voices, experiences and resources on a limited number of areas in order to enable a more joined up approach and increase our collective impact for change through greater collaboration.

The invitation is to churches, individuals and groups to discern how they can respond, or continue to respond, according to their context or their gifts. This may also involve prayerful consideration of what work to lay down.

In the Covenant service we are reminded that there are seasons and times when God will call us to particular services and ask us to lay aside others, and that we accept God's purposes for us. The Priorities are intended to echo this rhythm of reflection, commitment and action. Conference will confer on one of the Priorities every year, and they will be refreshed after five years.

The five **Priorities for justice** are:

1

Tackling inequality and poverty: seeking life in all its fullness

2

Enabling a flourishing environment: right relationship between people, planet and God

3

Seeking justice for refugees: one people, one world

4

Opposing discrimination: all are made in the image of God

5

Pursuing peace: seeking justice and reconciliation

The following pages show how the **Priorities** link to the **Principles for justice**, our heritage and people's experience. Examples are then given of what might be 'ours to do' if groups or organisations within the Church collaborate in supporting Methodist engagement with the **Priorities for justice**.



Priority



**Tackling inequality and poverty:
seeking life in all its fullness**

This Priority links to the Principles for justice because... God consistently shows a bias to those experiencing poverty and those who are excluded. This radically challenges the way we organise our society. Our value is not based on our (economic or other) contribution but because we are made in the image of God. God wants us not just to survive but to thrive and flourish.

Yet... The current cost of living crisis and its long-term impacts are dragging people deeper into poverty. Inequality and poverty scars the lives of individuals (particularly children) and communities in the UK. Whilst there is much work taking place developing the policy tools to end poverty, there is a lack of will from those in power to prioritise poverty and inequality in their decision-making.

From our past... Methodist concern for the poorest in society goes back to early Methodism. Central Halls prioritised work amongst the urban poor. Today a significant number of churches are active in supporting the poorest in local communities, through foodbanks, pantries, warm spaces, debt advice centres and more. In addition, JPIT has a reputation for detailed research and leading prophetic campaigning.

Groups with first-hand experience said... Poverty has a daily damaging impact. What is needed is a redistribution of wealth and power. People need enough to live on and to flourish. We need to be better connected and people need to be valued for being human. We need a new narrative about the economy which centres people and planet.

In the Justice Conversations... Economic inequality and poverty were mentioned, as was the cost of living crisis and the scandal of hunger in the UK. Groups talked about a just world being a place where people can flourish, thrive and be happy, and where everyone has enough.

Methodism brings... A widely shared understanding that Methodists prioritise tackling poverty. The experience and commitment of local churches which are rooted in communities. The Church at the Margins programme. The expertise and reputation of JPIT as an ecumenical campaign and advocacy group. Connections across grassroots community initiatives challenging poverty throughout the UK, as well as with national voices including political leaders, faith leaders and national charities.



So what is ours to do?

- **Connect** – nurture relationships with people experiencing poverty to build new Christian communities and with people in power to foster transformational relationships between them and the people engaged in the struggle with poverty to achieve lasting social change.
- **Campaign** – raise awareness of the impact of the cost of living crisis on those in poverty; as well as building a longer term national anti-poverty movement aimed at putting the moral case to end UK poverty at the heart of the political debate in the run up to the next general election.
- **Support** – engage with communities to support people dragged into poverty through this crisis.

A starting point might be... Reflect together on how well we know our local community, and indeed, people within our own congregation. This might involve intentional listening to one another and to neighbours. Walking prayerfully around the local area can be a powerful way of beginning to make connections, to notice things previously unseen, and to identify possible connections.



Priority 2 Enabling a flourishing environment: right relationship between people, planet and God

This links to the Principles for justice because... God desires the flourishing of creation and human community within it. The flourishing of creation describes a situation in which the present and future of human beings and all living things are somehow secured, in ways that respect the delicate balance between creatures and the environment.

Yet... Humanity is living beyond the fragile limits of our planet – of which the climate crisis is just one indicator. Environmental injustice impacts first and hardest on the poorest. Lifestyles of overconsumption and economic models that pursue growth regardless of ecological impacts place people already experiencing poverty in an increasingly worse situation.

From our past... Wesley believed that creation is grounded in God, and as part of God's creation we have a responsibility to care. A person's lifestyle should show justice and integrity, requiring people, for example, to pray about the money they spend.

Groups with first-hand experience said... In the run up to the COP26 meeting, a global group of young people collected stories from countries such as Fiji, Zambia, Uruguay, Italy, India and Britain. They told stories of communities displaced by rising sea levels, crops that were failing because of drought, the impact on fishing of the warming of oceans, as well as the work that is happening to try and mitigate the impact of the climate crisis.

In the Justice Conversations... Groups highlighted the importance of a healthy and flourishing environment – and how much humanity benefits from connection with creation. Others talked about the need to live more simply, reducing consumerism and excessive consumption.

Methodism brings... A clear theological statement, *Hope in God's Future*, on climate change. A Conference commitment to net zero and a plan for churches to engage with it. Connections with Partner Churches and communities around the globe. Campaigns with global and local focuses.



So what is ours to do?

- **Campaign** – raise awareness of the impact of the climate crisis and the need to make restitution through the Loss and Damage scheme.
- **Action for Hope** – move our churches towards net zero.
- **Challenge** – resist economic models which harm people and planet.

A starting point might be... Take next steps with Action for Hope towards net zero.

See methodist.org.uk/ActionForHope



Priority 3

**Seeking justice for refugees:
one people, one world**

This links to the Principles for justice because... All humans are made in the image of God and are worthy of equal value and dignity. The denial, hindering or waste of God's gifts is not only sin against God but represents an injustice against others. The Bible presents challenges to structural injustice.

Yet... The United Nations estimates the number of people forcibly displaced is now 89.3 million, with over 27.1 million refugees. Conflicts, poverty, and the climate crisis as well as the narrower definitions described in the Refugee Convention are behind this movement. In the UK, there is an anti-refugee narrative, with legislation increasingly limiting people's chances of exercising their right to claim asylum.

From our past... All We Can traces its roots back to the 1930s with the Methodist Refugee Fund responding to the crisis facing refugees in Europe. Over the past 90 years Methodist people have supported All We Can in working alongside communities around the world experiencing war, disaster and poverty. Local Churches and communities in Britain have offered a welcome and support to people arriving as refugees and asylum seekers, and Methodists have campaigned in support of people seeking sanctuary.

Groups with first-hand experience said... Asylum seekers spoke about the stress and uncertainty they faced, being unable to work, struggling to contact the Home Office, having little money and having difficulty accessing healthcare. Some praised the welcome and support they had received from a local Methodist Church of which they were now part.

In the Justice Conversations... A third of churches that responded to the Justice Conversations offer some support to refugees or asylum seekers. Many called for a more generous response to people seeking sanctuary in Britain. Many also highlighted some of the drivers behind people seeking refuge, including global inequality, the climate crisis and conflict.

Methodism brings... Links with Partner Churches in countries that send and receive refugees and migrants. Part of a broad coalition supporting refugees in Britain. A moral voice rooted in long-standing commitment and a willingness to challenge populist anti-immigration narratives.



So what is ours to do?

- **Campaign** – challenge moves to further restrict rights to claim asylum in Britain and support alternatives such as humanitarian visas.
- **Support** – offer practical support for people seeking refuge, from participating in Government schemes to hosting destitute asylum seekers or becoming a Church of Sanctuary.
- **Stories** – seek to shift the narrative about refugees and asylum seekers, for example through supporting people seeking refuge in telling their stories and helping communities share stories about countries that send and receive refugees around the world.

A starting point might be... Talk with your local authority, Refugees Welcome group or local refugee organised group to find out how refugees and asylum seekers are housed in your area. Explore what they need and how you might help to affirm their well-being, agency and dignity. Consider what it means to become a Church of Sanctuary.



Priority 4 **Opposing discrimination: all are made in the image of God**

This links to the Principles for justice because... All humans are made in the image of God and are worthy of equal value and dignity. We must not only refrain from injustice, but actively seek peace and pursue it, in all our encounters, in our attitudes, and in our participation in the proclamation and enactment of the kingdom. We, too, are called to live in ways that upend the accepted values of the world.

Yet... There are many examples of how people experience discrimination. There is significant income inequality between ethnic groups, due largely to lower wages, higher housing costs and the impact of the benefit cap. Disabled people are more likely to be living in poverty, unemployed and without further qualifications. The pandemic had a disproportionate impact on people from certain already disadvantaged groups. People who experience more than one form of disadvantage or discrimination (intersectionality) are hit even harder.

From our past... Wesley recognised that the structures of society impact the individual – for example the influence of rising grain prices on people experiencing poverty or the violent effects of colonialism – and took a personal stand. He spoke out strongly against the slave trade and was deeply affected by writing of Olaudah Equiano, a former slave. There has been a slow but growing recognition of the need to change our Church's structures and culture, embodied in the recent Conference commitment to the Justice, Dignity and Solidarity Strategy.

Groups with first-hand experience said... People spoke about how they had experienced discrimination including in church contexts. Young people at 3Generate spoke about experiences of racism, fears of violence, and discrimination.

In the Justice Conversations... Equality and inclusion were significant themes, with many referring to the need to end discrimination and prejudice. Racism, gender inequality and the barriers faced by disabled people were mentioned most frequently, with people also making links between discrimination and access to housing, employment or other services.

Methodism brings... A Methodist theology underpinning the inclusion work. An active JDS strategy with a strand focused on transformation. Existing commitments to campaigning on injustices which can be linked together. A growing willingness to face up to our past.

So what is ours to do?

- **Intersectionality** – use the idea of multiple disadvantage as a key way of understanding injustice, and seek ways of engaging with it.
- **Solidarity** – seek opportunities for churches to stand alongside communities opposing discrimination, complementing the JDS strategy.
- **Prioritise** – support young people experiencing discrimination in society.

A starting point might be... Screen the film *After the Flood: The Church, Slavery and Reconciliation* at your church and host a conversation about the implications of it.



Priority 5 Pursuing peace: seeking justice and reconciliation

This links to the Principles for justice because... Peace and justice are tightly woven together. Peace cannot exist without justice. In order to create peace in the world we need to know peace within our own relationships and communities too.

Yet... Global conflicts kill, injure and displace millions every year. Violence and conflict are interwoven with poverty, homelessness, environmental degradation and historic injustices. Nations and industry promote a narrative that security can only be achieved through increased military expenditure, which restricts resources put into reconciliation and peace-building. The possession of nuclear weapons implies the possibility of their use and yet any use of nuclear weapons would be immoral and catastrophic.

From our past... Methodist Central Hall Westminster hosted the inaugural meeting of the United Nations General Assembly in 1946. There has been a significant strand of Conscientious Objection particularly amongst some in the Primitive Methodist Church, co-existing with chaplaincy in the armed forces, with the current Army Chaplain General and Deputy Chaplain General both being Methodist ministers. Methodist Conference supported the signing of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in 2017.

Groups with first-hand experience said... People spoke of the need for those who have not experienced conflict to be aware of the complexity of conflict. Even when things look peaceful, tension and the potential for violence can often lurk beneath the surface. Unless the injustices which nurture conflict are addressed (economic and social marginalisation and discrimination, misuse of power, corruption) both the legacy of conflicts long past and the psychological impact of living through or escaping conflict can continue to choke the potential for individuals and communities to flourish.

In the Justice Conversations... The need for peace was mentioned by a large number of people, either in general or in relation to specific conflicts, eg Ukraine, Yemen, Afghanistan, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Methodism brings... Scriptures which are replete with a vision of God's kingdom where justice and peace "kiss each other" (Psalm 85:10). Congregations and Partner Churches with first-hand experience of conflict and violence. Campaigning experience around peace and weapons.



So what is ours to do?

- **Communicate** – speak more confidently about peace and non-violence – theologically and politically – whilst recognising our disagreements.
- **Stories** – share experiences of violence and conflict.
- **Campaign** – advocate for a just peace, for example through campaigns to fund post-conflict reconciliation and alternatives to conflict.

A starting point might be... Find out whether your bank or pension scheme is investing in nuclear weapons through #InvestingInChange (investinginchange.uk) supported by the Methodist Church, and write to ask them about their policies. Use resources reflecting on peace on Peace Sunday or Remembrance Sunday.



Reflecting on all five **Priorities for justice** above, ask yourself...

- Which of these Priorities speaks to your community or is most challenging for you?
- What are you already doing?
- What gifts or strengths do you bring?
- What might you lay down or do differently?
- How does what you do (or could do) contribute to the work of the whole Methodist Church in seeking justice?

Practices for justice

What does it look like to practice justice? The Quaker Meeting House in Chelmsford is near the Crown Court. In 2018, 15 young people were charged with aviation security offences after breaching Stansted Airport's fence and locking themselves together around the front nose-wheel of a plane which was being prepared to deport 60 people to Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. The protesters claimed that they were acting to prevent human rights abuses taking place. Hundreds of people gathered outside the Crown Court.

Members of several Quaker Meetings nearby supported the protesters' non-violent stance in opposition to mass deportations, and collectively agreed to give their support. Some Quakers provided accommodation in their homes to defendants and family members for the duration of the trial. Chelmsford Meeting collectively decided to provide their Quaker Meeting House for use as a sanctuary and base for the defendants and their supporters, with Quakers providing food for larger gatherings. Local Quakers, the defendants, and some supporters held a Quaker Meeting for Worship on the evening before the trial started. One Quaker regularly stood on the steps outside the courthouse with sandwich-boards expressing support for the Stansted 15. Many local Quakers attended the several large vigils held outside the courthouse at key points in the trial, and brought food for the participants. Some Quakers offered spiritual and pastoral support to defendants and supporters as needed. And on many days of the trial, Quakers sat conspicuously in the courtroom to show their solidarity with the defendants.

All of these people were involved in Quaker witness against deportation. They responded in a range of ways – standing in solidarity, praying, making food – according to their own personal gifts or preferences, whilst being upheld by their cohesion as a worshipping community.

As Quakers, each person's contribution became an act of activism because of the collective witness of the Meeting.

The Stansted 15 were acquitted on appeal, after the Court ruled that there was no case to answer.

(Story provided by Quakers in Britain)



A justice-seeking church and people need practices which will enable sustainable, flourishing, transformative action for justice, rooted in God.

Christian discipleship includes the call to be and to act as a prophetic community: people who are willing to recognise and engage with the reality of the 'world as it is', and who yet look with hope and anticipation to the 'world as it should be', and in all their actions seek to bring that transformation.

As Methodists, our justice-seeking takes place in the local, connexional and global spheres; we seek justice both as part of our individual discipleship and also as part of a body committed to the connexional principle of belonging, mutuality and interdependence.

The following sections consider two approaches to practising justice – **ways of doing** and **ways of being**. It sets out some of the practices which enable this sustainable and transformative action for justice.



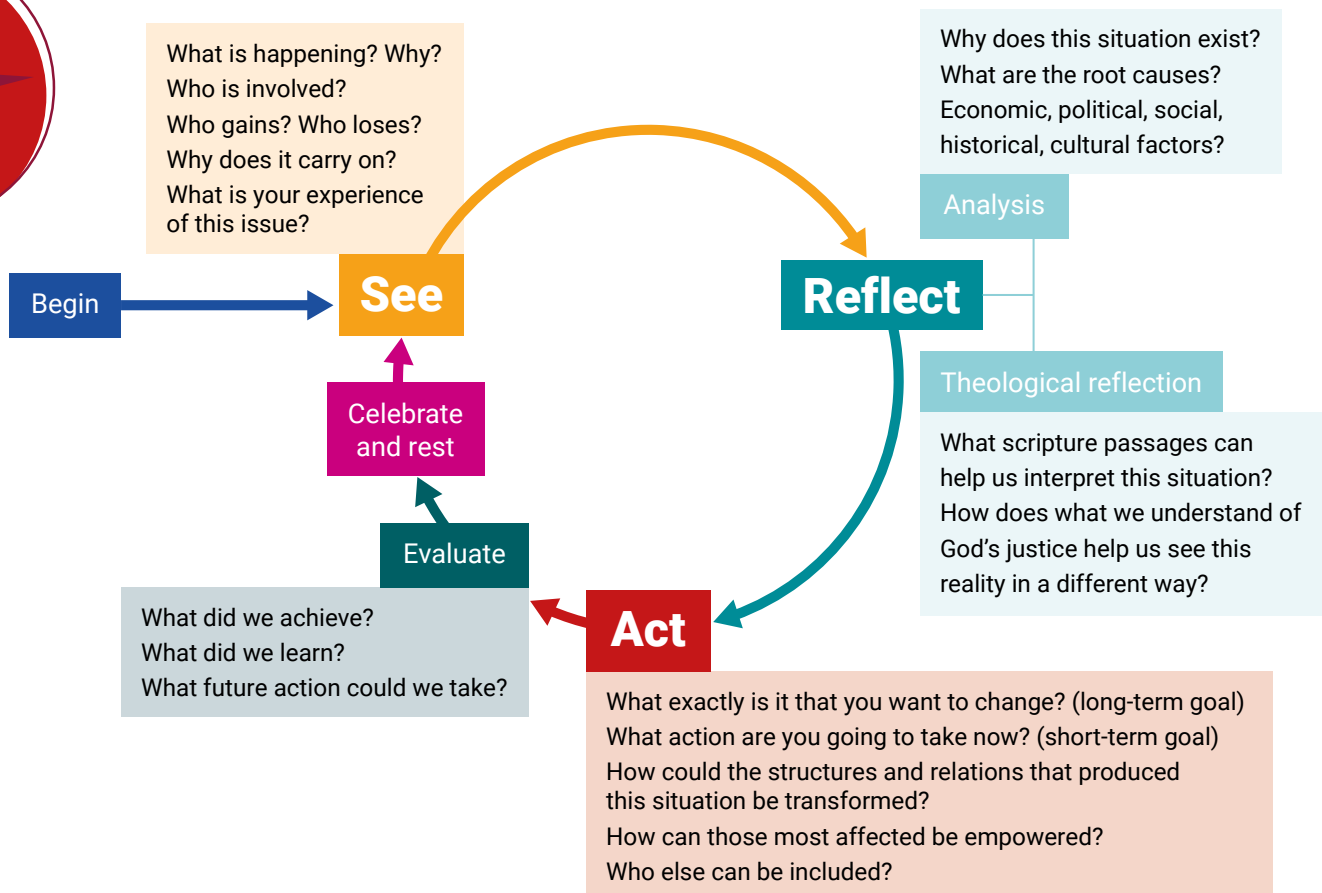
Practising justice: ways of *doing*

So what should we do to make justice? How do we respond to injustice and put justice-seeking into practice in our personal and community lives?

See-Reflect-Act

Firstly, we should think before acting! Catholic theologians and liberation theology communities developed the model of See-Judge-Act (or See-Reflect-Act) to help people to reflect critically and theologically on the realities we face – and, crucially, to resist the temptation of leaping straight into action.

Begin by **'seeing'** a situation of injustice deeply by asking what is happening, who is involved, who gains or loses, why it is happening, and why it carries on. Then, through a process of analysis and theological **reflection**, discern the deeper truths. Proposals for **action** to change the situation and address its root causes will emerge from this, empowering those who are disadvantaged in this situation. Of course this is a cycle or a spiral that should be constantly repeated and evaluated, alongside those most closely affected by the situation where possible.³



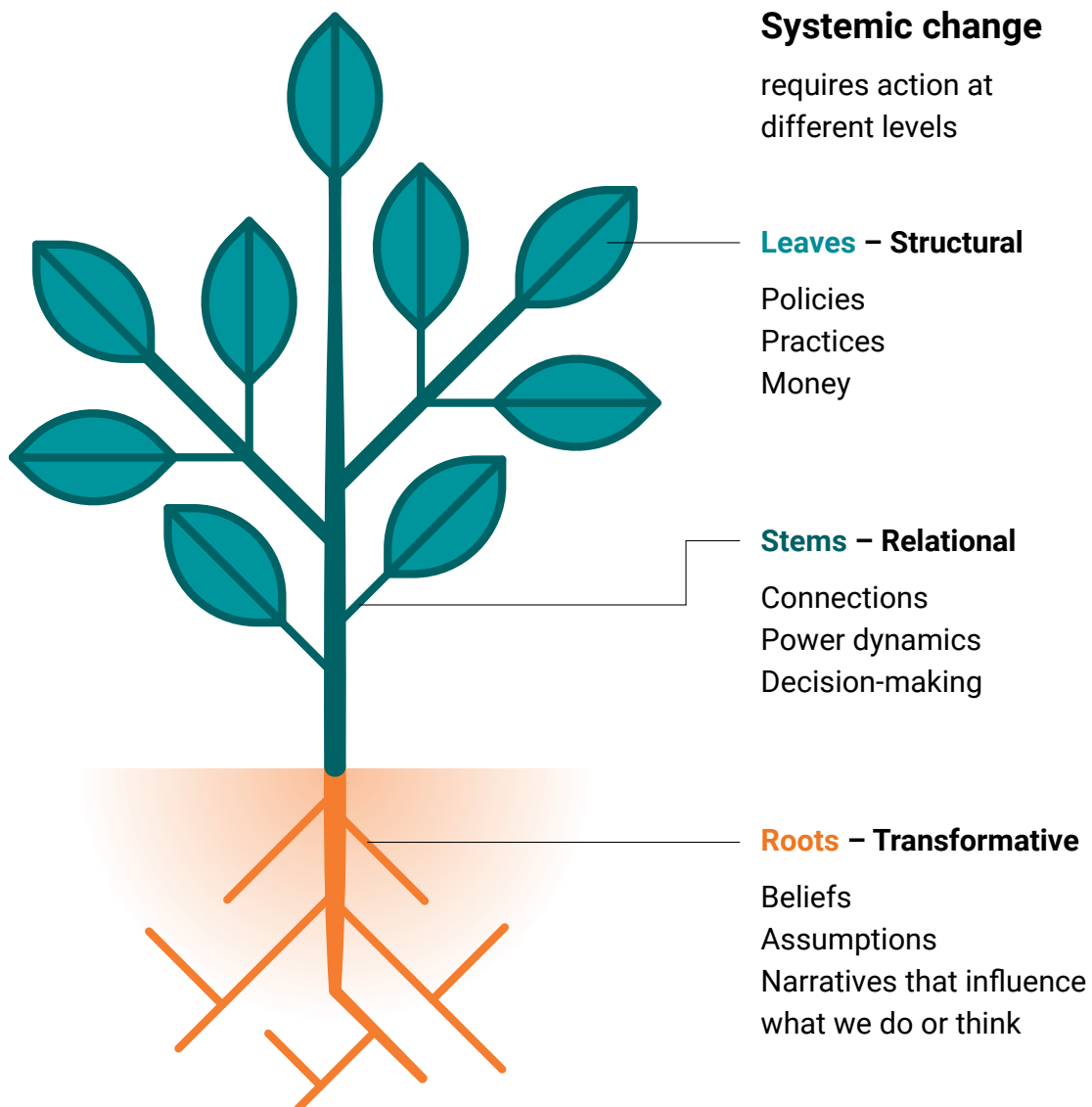
³ For more on using this method, see grassroots.caritas.eu/see-judge-act

How do our actions contribute to change?

Next, we should reflect on the fact that *how* we choose to act contributes to the change we want to see.

Sometimes, only certain actions are available to us. Some actions may sit more naturally with our temperament. Some are more open to those with certain privileges. Yet, when there is a choice, we are challenged to choose the action that is most likely to have an impact and contribute to bringing about change.

Often our response to seeing injustice is to respond to the immediate need. But we should not focus on social action to the exclusion of other forms of social justice which build long-term change and tackle underlying causes. This kind of systemic change needs changes to structures and policies, relationships and connections, and the underlying beliefs or assumptions which shape them. Crucially, systemic change is most likely to be sustained when all three levels of change are involved.



After analysing the roots of injustice and discerning the deeper truths through the See-Reflect-Act activity, churches, individuals and groups can then look at how the actions they may wish to take contribute to the changes they want to see, through changing structures, relationships and underlying assumptions.

The following list describes some of the key ways in which Methodists are found acting for justice, and some of the challenges that are involved.

1. **Responding to need.** This is seen in social action projects of local churches responding to an identified need or injustice within their community. Volunteering can be a source of transformation for volunteers themselves, and, church, at its best, can feel like a place of hospitality and generosity.

Examples include: Warm Welcome spaces, debt advice centres, refugee support centres.

2. **Responses to need** should also have a **justice dimension** as social provision alone can be short term and lack the transformation needed. There is also a risk of assuming what is needed rather than finding out what communities want to do.

Examples include: community pantries, campaigns shaped by people with first-hand experience of injustice.

3. **Relationship building.** This takes time, but anchoring our social engagement in listening enables a deeper understanding, and offers the possibility of providing advocacy, developing local leadership and working in solidarity and collaboration for wider structural change.

Examples include: asset-based community development, community organising, Church at the Margins.

4. **Changing rules or practices** at local, national and global level. This can feel challenging but change often happens through small steps and we have a role in shaping the processes and cultures of our political life. Asking questions around where decision-making power lies, and that of potential partners and ourselves, will help us to identify where we have influence.

Examples include: campaigning, lobbying, awareness raising.

5. **Personal impact.** There will be certain issues which matter particularly to us as individuals. Decisions about what we do with our finances and our priorities, how we treat others, what we do with our time, all have a potential impact.

Examples include: ethical choices in our lifestyle, using our financial power, commitment to a particular cause.



6. **Creative and symbolic** acts of prophetic witness. These can raise awareness of injustice, but also engage people more deeply through opportunities to lament, to pray, to seek confession and restitution, or to offer hope in times of overwhelm. Craft, music, art and drama can be powerful allies in prophetic witness.

Examples include: craftivism, public liturgy, and symbolic protests.

7. **Visible activism** through demonstrating or protesting. This can be a powerful and highly visible way of acting for justice, although not everyone can go on a march and there can be a personal risk to protesting for some people. The Methodist Conference report, *Accept and Resist*, says that acts of civil disobedience or resistance can be Christian responses but should be focused on policies, not individual persons, and should only be engaged in after careful self-reflection, prayerful discernment, and a commitment to accepting the consequences of engaging in such acts.

Examples include: participation in demonstrations, civil disobedience, or resistance.

All these actions have a place in a justice-seeking church. Some may be more needed at particular times and places. As individuals we may have different strengths and preferences. We are each called to join in with God's kingdom plan and together our acts become powerful.



- Find out more about the See-Reflect-Act cycle to learn more, reflect and plan your justice actions. What will they be?
- Look at what actions you are involved with. What changes are they bringing about? In what ways are they meeting immediate need, contributing to changing structures, building relationships for justice, or transforming beliefs and assumptions?

Practising justice: ways of *being*

Despite our best intentions, do people experience justice through our actions? Rosabeth Moss-Kanter, an academic at Harvard, said: *“When we do change to people they experience it as violence; when people do change for themselves they experience it as liberation.”* How can we ensure our justice practices – our ways of *being* – are consistent with what we believe about God’s justice?

The five approaches to practising justice listed below help us to stay close to God and to those who experience injustice. They assist us in discerning how and where to act, as well as humbly acknowledging our failures and limitations. They spring from a Methodist Way of Life and build on the expectation that Methodists are engaging in various forms of justice activity.

Being with not for

Justice is about ‘being with’ people rather than ‘doing to’ or ‘working for’ people. ‘Being with’ means our relationships are characterised by friendship, respect and a willingness to give time to listening. We practise justice in ways that involve communities in making decisions together, having agency and dignity, and standing in solidarity together. If we do not have personal experience of injustice ourselves, we practise ‘being with’ by seeking the knowledge and wisdom of those with first-hand experience, rather than relying solely on what we think we know, which can cause further harm.

Yet the burden for action must not be placed on those who have experienced injustice. If we have experience of injustice ourselves, we may choose to share our experience openly. Yet trauma, tiredness or rage, amongst other reasons, may mean we do not wish to speak and that is sufficient. There are many ways in which people who wish to be attentive to injustice can listen.

Humility in community

Justice is about being alongside our neighbours, within an ongoing mutual conversation between local churches, different parts of the Connexion, the world community, and those of other faiths and none, all seeking to act justly. This means recognising that we may not understand the ‘full picture’. We may get things wrong, and there is always more to learn. Practising humility in our communities involves being honest and realistic about what churches represent and can offer. We are rarely the size or strength we once were. But we are not tasked with being a hero or rescuer, and instead are called to respond as collaborators with God. This way of being prompts us to join in with our local communities and others globally, building community with those different from ourselves, and collaborating where we can.



Self-awareness and the use of power

Justice is about recognising power imbalances within the world and our communities, and being wise in our use of power. None of us stands outside the systems that constitute our communities and societies, or systems of sin that disconnect us from God, from each other, from the created world. We may benefit, knowingly or unknowingly, from the power imbalances that maintain injustices in our world.

Being attentive to power involves self-awareness and careful discernment, about what we, as individuals and church, are called to do and how we are called to respond. We are sometimes called to give our power away to others, to share it, or to claim it and use it well. Jesus knew how to use or sacrifice power and following his example in this can be profoundly counter-cultural.

Visibility and transformation

Desmond Tutu is credited with saying, *“There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they’re falling in.”* Our justice-seeking should focus both on present injustices and on the future transformation of deep or systemic injustices. Following a Methodist Way of Life includes “challeng[ing] injustice”. This involves engaging with the reality of the world as it is and the challenges faced by many, and bringing to light injustices that are ignored or unrecognised, but also holding on to the hope that transformation, healing, and right relationship can and will be restored, leading to the flourishing of all God’s creation.

Prayer

Justice is about connecting with God, holding both our actions and our limitations before God, and seeking in prayer the well-being and flourishing of others. We are called to pray daily and worship with others regularly. In prayer, we may express our anger, our powerlessness and our passion for change in the face of many tragedies and injustices, confess our failings, and offer our thanks for small or large positive change. This way of being involves connecting to the character and work of the God of justice, so that we draw on limitless divine grace, and live hopefully.



- How do these practices challenge or resonate with something that you or your church is doing?
- How might they help us to be ‘at our best’ when seeking justice – and are there things we might do differently as a result?



What might it look like to be a justice-seeking church?

The **Principles, Priorities** and **Practices for justice** reflect how the Methodist Church envisages God's justice at this time and place. How then might these be embedded in the life of Methodism?

The following are given as examples of possible actions.

Integrating the 'Principles for justice' into our learning and decision-making

- Identifying opportunities to engage with the Principles through, for example, ministerial formation, lay training and preacher development or 3Generate
- Encouraging group Bible studies and intergenerational conversations around the Principles
- Using the Principles when exploring current justice issues and when articulating Methodist responses to injustices
- Reflecting the language of the Principles in our prayer and liturgy

Engaging with the 'Practices: approaches to justice' at all levels of church life

- Encouraging churches and others within the Connexion to reflect on their current and future justice activities in the light of *ways of being just* and *doing justice*, and to look at ways of doing things differently
- Using the language of the approaches to justice in Methodist communications to encourage more reflection on *being just* and *doing justice*

Collaborating on the 'Priorities for justice'

- Conferring annually at the Conference on one of the Priorities
- Churches, Circuits and Districts identifying synergy between the Priorities and their own strategies and identifying what is theirs to do
- Working ecumenically where possible, collaborating around each of the Priorities with a range of partners, to share resources, communicate clearly and support churches in their actions



- Shaping connexionally-resourced work around the Priorities – for example, JPIT running campaigns; Children, Youth and Families (CY&F) supporting children and young people working for justice and influencing change through their churches; global Church partners shaping work on refugees; other Methodist organisations such as All We Can exploring where their advocacy work overlaps with the Priorities
- Developing communities of practice for individuals and churches deeply engaged with each of the Priorities in order to support one another

Supporting local churches and others making a shift towards justice

- Resourcing churches and leaders of worship as they reimagine worship as justice-seeking churches
- Offering support for engaging with justice through mission planning; Church at the Margins; a Methodist Way of Life; Learning Network; ministries; communications; JPIT; Children, Youth and Family; ministerial training, etc
- Seeking opportunities for collective support in prayer for those engaged in justice-seeking
- Training and support for leaders of all ages, from children up, within churches, circuits and districts who identify as being leaders for justice
- Rolling out of the Methodist faith-rooted community organising pilot and support for Methodists engaging in community organising
- Providing training and focus for engagement via JPIT's Constituency Action Network project
- Promoting regular opportunities for churches to engage with one of the Priorities, according to the plans developed for each of them by the collaboration groups



- These are just examples of how the **Principles, Priorities and Practices for justice** might be embedded in the Methodist Church. What actions might you want to see?
- What might be yours to do where you are?

Imagine...

Imagine for a moment you are granted a vision of the future of the Methodist Church.

What do you see? A shrinking institution with a limited future... or a small, sometimes marginalised, but richly diverse community with a big vision and a deep passion for justice and peace, living out a Methodist Way of Life.

A Church where:

- friendships span the divides of society;
- listening to the lived, painful experience of those unjustly treated is normal, informing prayer and action;
- there is repentance for failures in perpetuating or benefiting from injustice;
- children and adults are safe from abuse and exploitation;
- all are valued and treated with respect;
- discrimination in all its forms is challenged;
- christians act together with partners to seek justice and peace;
- compassion for those in need inspires care and empowers action for structural change;
- there is a desire to be and go beyond being a net zero Church to create grace spaces for flourishing;
- refugees and those seeking asylum are welcomed, supported and offered solidarity;
- members regularly meet with their MP to share stories and seek change;
- children and young people are recognised, encouraged and supported as justice leaders and empowered to lead worship and action with all generations joining them in their work;
- a community pantry, offering affordable food, is hosted at the church, but owned by the local community;
- a truly affordable housing project is led by the community, providing safe and warm homes;
- opportunities are sought to speak into the public square and engage in acts of prophetic witness;



- worship allows for painful lament and deeply felt intercession, as well as thanksgiving and praise;
- the Connexion uses its combined strength to engage with its justice priorities;
- the bonds between people, communities, nations, generations, and all living things are enhanced;
- our hope in God is continually renewed and our passion for the carrying the good news is bold, sharing the story, and holding social action and social justice, equally in our hands.

The angel of Methodism says to its churches: *"this may be so, if my people are faithful to their calling."*



- What is your vision of the difference a justice-seeking Church can make?
- Thinking about your community, church, circuit and district, what is the next step you could take?

Summary of questions for reflection

1. What does justice or injustice look and feel like to you? How would you describe 'seeking justice'?
2. What are the key local, national or global events over the past decade for you? How has your community changed over this time? In addition to increasing pressures, what changes have you seen for good?
3. What stories of action for justice from your history are important to you and why? What can we learn from them today?
4. Are there hymns about God's justice which you find more challenging – again why is this?
5. What pictures of God's justice do you see in the Bible? Which ones particularly speak to your experience? How do our understandings of God's justice shape the good news we share?
6. The **Justice Conversations** considered these questions:
 - a. Imagine a fair, more equal and life-bringing society and world... what does that look like?
 - b. What's the biggest obstacle to such a just world?
 - c. What is the most important step in making this a reality?

What themes emerge for you?
7. How are you or your local church engaged in seeking justice? What challenges do you face? What strengths or gifts do you bring?
8. Which of the **Principles for justice** speaks most to you and why? Thinking of a current issue of injustice – how might one or more of the Principles help you to think more deeply about God's justice in this situation?
9. Which of the **Priorities for justice** speaks to your community or is most challenging for you? What are you already doing? What gifts or strengths do you bring? What might you lay down or do differently? How do you (or could you) see what you do as contributing to the work of the whole Methodist Church in seeking justice?
10. Find out more about the See-Judge-Act cycle to learn more, reflect and plan your justice actions. Look at what actions you are involved with. What changes are they bringing about? In what ways are they meeting immediate need, contributing to changing structures, building relationships for justice, or transforming beliefs and assumptions?



11. How do the **Practices for justice** challenge or resonate with something that you or your church is doing? How might they help us to be 'at our best' when seeking justice – and are there things we might do differently as a result?
12. What actions might you want to see to help embed the **Principles, Priorities** and **Practices for justice** in the Methodist Church? What might be yours to do where you are?
13. What is your vision of the difference a justice-seeking church can make? Thinking about your community, church, circuit and district, what is the next step you could take?

Further opportunities for group discussion, worship and practical action will be available to help people to engage more with this report. For more information visit methodist.org.uk/Justice



Space to note down your questions, reflections and next steps

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