

Walking with Micah: Guided group session

The *Walking with Micah* project is helping the Methodist Church in Britain focus on its priorities for social justice. This is one of the resources you can use within your church group to guide a Justice Conversation. The hope is that Methodist groups will reflect together and share their responses.

At the heart of each Justice Conversation will be a commitment to:

- listen to people with experience of injustice
- explore where God is, and
- reflect on what a just, equal and life-giving world looks like

This resource is for a 90-minute session. The timings are a guide: the session can be made shorter or longer if you are relaxed about timing. The session can also be delivered over zoom, using breakout rooms or the chat as ways of helping people to contribute.

All groups are invited to send in feedback to these questions:

- **Imagine a fair, more equal and life-bringing society and world....what does that look like?**
- **To get there, what is the most important issue that needs addressing?**
- **And what is one key action that needs to be taken to address it?**

At the end of your Justice Conversation, please visit

www.methodist.org.uk/walking-with-micah-send-your-response/#e-survey to send your feedback.

Resources for this session can be found as follows:

- [Speaking from Experience](#) – a short film in which people speak about their experiences of injustice and their hopes for a just world
- [Justice: Which horizon?](#) – an animation encouraging people to look beyond immediate problems towards a vision of a just world
- [Sheet for note-takers](#) – to support note-taking during the session

You can find other resources including ideas for youth or intergenerational groups, as well as for preaching, Bible study and craftivism at

www.methodist.org.uk/walking-with-micah-justice-conversations/. You are invited to use any of these resources flexibly and creatively for your group.

Important, before you begin:

This session has been designed, as far as possible, to encourage full participation of all those in attendance. The facilitator needs to be aware that there is a danger of people being reluctant to contribute, perhaps because of personal experience of injustice or fear that their views will be in the minority. We would therefore recommend that you encourage the participants to respect one another – particularly respecting confidentiality (where it doesn't infringe on good safeguarding protocol).

There may be a danger of some participants dominating the discussion if they have a lot to say. We therefore encourage you to circulate the discussion groups if you think this will help. You could also introduce different facilitation skills, such as a 'speaking object' (like a ball, talking stick etc.) or allowing people to write feedback as well as verbalising it, to allow maximum opportunity for all to participate.

Finally, there is also a risk that some people participating in this session will be upset by the topic under discussion. The sensitivity of the subject needs to be acknowledged at the start of the session and participants need to be aware of the different ways in which they can seek support to help deal with issues – both during the session and afterwards. Whilst it is important, as outlined above, that participants have equal opportunity to speak if they wish, this should always be optional.

Preparation

Instructions for group leaders are in green.

In preparation for the session, you will need

- A laptop (and depending where you are a projector) to download or stream the short films to accompany this session
 - Paper, pens and post-it notes.
 - Printed copies of Appendices 1 and 2 – found at the end of the document, to be cut up as shown.
 - A copy of the [Sheet for note-takers](#) form which will help you or the notetaker collect your group's final feedback
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- If you are meeting on Zoom or other platforms, you may choose to adapt this session, and you can use creative ways to help people generate ideas or talk in smaller groups. For example you can explore different tools such as Mentimeter (www.mentimeter.com), Poll Everywhere (www.polleverywhere.com), Padlet (www.padlet.com) and Jamboard (<https://jamboard.google.com/> or search in your Google apps).

[5 minutes]

Gathering

Welcome members of the group, let them introduce themselves briefly, and share the purpose of the session:

The Methodist Church has a long commitment to be a justice-seeking church, and we are part of this tradition. This session will explore what justice looks like, and help us to take part in the Church's conversation about what our principles and priorities for justice should be as a church. Obviously it's a huge subject and this is just a taster.

Prayer

Loving God,
You long for justice for your world.
You long for right relationships, for people to have life in all its fullness.
Your justice turns tables and blesses the poor and the peacemakers.
Help us today to open our hearts and minds.
Help us not just to talk of justice,
but to feel your call on our lives to act for justice
in the name of your son.
Amen.

[10 minutes]

Our understanding and tradition of justice

Justice is a huge concept – what words and ideas might it encompass?

Ask people to write down the first three words that come to mind when thinking about “justice” and then share these ideas (eg ‘social action’, ‘working for the common good’, ‘being in solidarity with others’, ‘fairness’). Ask them to avoid judging each other's suggestions.

We stand in a long tradition of people working for justice. Who can you think of who has worked for justice? These might be:

- People or groups working for justice today
- Figures in Methodist history
- Other Christians or people of other faiths

You could ask people to stick post-it notes with their ideas on a wall or collect ideas on a flipchart.

Discuss as a group:

- What justice actions are these people or groups carrying out? (For example acts of compassion, meeting others' needs, campaigning, calling for legislation, non-violent direct action, people speaking for themselves.) You can write as many examples as you can think of on sheets around the room.
- Which people, group, or traditions have you learned from? And what have you learned about justice? Do any of these people and their actions speak to your own experience of justice?

[25 minutes]

Experiences of injustice

We're going to begin our reflections on what justice looks like with people's authentic experiences of injustice.

In your discussions, be aware of stereotyping and rumour creeping in. Some people may want to share anecdotes: be mindful whether these will help the discussion or not. Similarly your group may contain people who have experienced injustice who may or may not wish to share their personal experiences.

As a group, watch the short film at www.methodist.org.uk/walking-with-micah-speaking-from-experience which has personal testimonies of experiences of injustice. After you have seen the film, ask the group to reflect on what they have learned.

This conversation will need to be guided carefully, avoiding judgemental comments or a focus only on people's own feelings of injustices. Also, whilst the films show examples of injustice experienced by individuals it is important to start putting these in the context of wider injustices present in society (the speakers' ideas for change may be used to help here).

- Ask each person to share something they learned from the testimonies they heard. What surprised them? What one thing will they take away as they think about justice?
- As they heard individual stories and experiences, what connections did they make with wider injustices in society?

[20 minutes]

What would it be like if things were as God intended?

What Bible stories or themes give us insights into God's justice?

Depending on the confidence of your group you could invite people to choose a Bible story or theme that is particularly important to them, or offer suggestions. Below are a few. These can also be found at Appendix 1 - you could print them off and cut them up so participants could choose one or two to read and talk about.

Ask your group to get into pairs and let each pair choose a Bible story to talk about. What insights do we gain about God's justice from this passage? What questions does it leave us with?

When the group comes back together use the conversation to bring together different perspectives on justice in the Bible? You could help people to start making connections with the previous conversation on experiences of injustice – where is God in this? What do we learn about God's justice?

Examples of “justice” in the Bible

Exodus 20:2-17 - The Ten Commandments

Deuteronomy 10:19 – “You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.”

Isaiah 11:4 – “But with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth.”

Amos 5:24 – “But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.”

Micah 6:8 – “... to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.”

Matthew 20:1-16 – The parable of the workers in the vineyard

Mark 5:25-34 – The healing of the woman with haemorrhages

Luke 18:1-8 – The parable of the widow and the unjust judge

John 8:1-11 – The woman caught in adultery is brought before Jesus

[10 minutes]

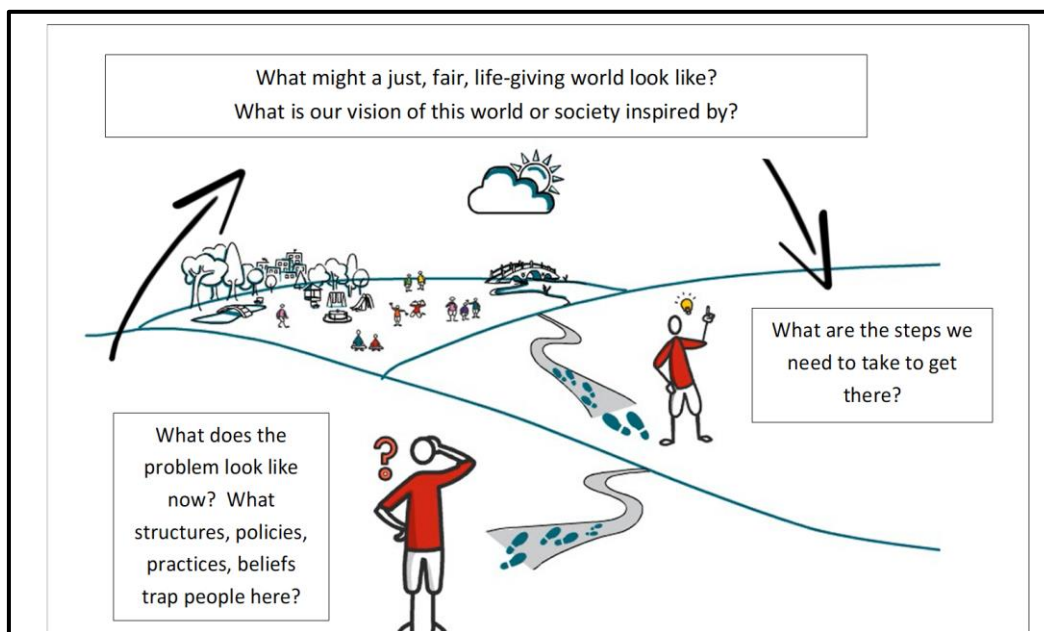
Which horizon? exercise

We learn about acting for justice from what we read in the Bible, from what we hear, what we do. We learn acting for justice isn't easy and it's not always straightforward. How do we stop ourselves from being overwhelmed? How do we try to head in the right direction?

You can show the short animation which describes three different horizons or use the image below, both available at to help explore the three different horizons. The film is available at www.methodist.org.uk/walking-with-micah-justice-conversations/#film and the slide is at www.methodist.org.uk/walking-with-micah-tools

This exercise below is about encouraging people to lift their eyes to imagine a just world, and then take steps towards it.

After showing the animation or picture discuss it with the group. Check their understanding...



- Imagine the first horizon. This represents the situation at the moment, the problems faced by the world, and the structures and practices that sustain the status quo, keeping people stuck, or meaning they are trapped in poverty.
- The second horizon is about fixes. How might the current situation be improved? What factors might mitigate it? (The answer could be actions such as changes to the welfare system or a better welcome for refugees.)
- But the third horizon is about how we want life to be. What is our dream for a world that is just, fair and more sustainable – a new way of doing things?

Ask people briefly to think through an issue, such as the use of foodbanks, using the three different horizons:

- **[first horizon]** What does the problem look like now? What structures and practices maintain the status quo?
- **[third horizon]** And what is a just world for people eg who are using foodbanks? (Push answers beyond “not going to foodbanks” or “having food” to more creative ones such as “being able to choose what to cook”, “eating with others not alone”, “being able to weather crises”.)
- What do we draw on for this vision (our faith, the Bible, our experiences, encounters with others, what we have heard or learned...?)
- **[second horizon]** And if we start with this vision of a just world, what are the kinds of steps needed to get there?

[15 minutes]

I dream of a world...

This is an exercise to get people to dream about getting to the third horizon in light of what we've thought about God's justice.

The Walking with Micah project would like to collect feedback to these questions to shape the Methodist Church's future work on justice:

- **Imagine a fair, more equal and life-bringing society and world....what does that look like? In small groups or pairs think of three statements that describe elements of what a more just, equal and sustainable society will look like. You could have in mind your community, our country or the whole world.**
- **To get there, what is the most important issue that needs addressing?**
- **And what is one key action that needs to be taken to address it?**

Together, share feedback on each group's dreams and key steps. Your group may come up with a number of answers to these questions. Encourage them to focus on the 1-3 answers which they believe are most important. Are there areas where there was strong agreement? Or disagreement?

[Appendix 2 is a sheet you can print out to help groups capture their answers](#)

You could post these up around the room, or make a display.

As facilitator please arrange to collect feedback on these questions, either through the small groups or after conversation in the whole group. Were there ideas or actions which were commonly supported across the group? Then enter your response through the e-survey at www.methodist.org.uk/walking-with-micah-send-your-response/#e-survey

(Optional exercise – if the group wishes to continue beyond 90 minutes)

What next?

You've started describing your dreams for our country and the world.

- How are you already contributing – as a church or as individuals?
- How can your actions helping plant seeds of a just future rather than sustaining the problems of the present?
- How can your dreams for the future will become a reality for the people experiencing the injustices you've identified?
- What can your group do next....?

[5 minutes]

Close

Remind people of the purpose of the Walking with Micah project:

- The Walking with Micah team will be collecting feedback from groups around the country. It will be helping the Church to listen to people experiencing injustice, and to learn from our theology, heritage, and from the wider Methodist family. Together we will identify the stories, principles, practices and priorities to enable us all to be part of a justice-seeking church. For more information visit www.methodist.org.uk/walking-with-micah
- Ask each group member to name one thing they will take away from today's meeting and how they will act justly and differently as a result.

Close by saying The Grace together.

Thank you for leading this session.

Please remember to contribute your group's feedback to the Walking With Micah consultation by visiting www.methodist.org.uk/walking-with-micah-send-your-response/#e-survey

If you'd like to explore further, or lead worship, intergenerational or craftivist sessions, you can find more resources here www.methodist.org.uk/walking-with-micah-justice-conversations/

Appendix 1: examples of justice in the Bible

You can print off and cut up this sheet to use in the activity 'What would it be like if things were as God intended?'



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| <p>Exodus 20:2-17</p> <p>The Ten Commandments</p> | <p>Deuteronomy 10:19</p> <p>“You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.”</p> | <p>Isaiah 11:4</p> <p>“But with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth.”</p> |
| <p>Amos 5:24</p> <p>“But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.”</p> | <p>Micah 6:8</p> <p>“.. to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.”</p> | <p>Matthew 20:1-16</p> <p>The parable of the workers in the vineyard</p> |
| <p>Mark 5:25-34</p> <p>The healing of the woman with haemorrhages</p> | <p>Luke 18:1-8</p> <p>The parable of the widow and the unjust judge</p> | <p>John 8</p> <p>The woman caught in adultery is brought before Jesus</p> |

Appendix 2 Try to capture your top 3 answers

Answer 1

Imagine a fair, more equal and life-bringing society and world....what does that look like?

To get there, what is the most important issue that needs addressing?

And what is one key action that needs to be taken to address it?

Answer 2

Imagine a fair, more equal and life-bringing society and world....what does that look like?

To get there, what is the most important issue that needs addressing?

And what is one key action that needs to be taken to address it?

Answer 3

Imagine a fair, more equal and life-bringing society and world....what does that look like?

To get there, what is the most important issue that needs addressing?

And what is one key action that needs to be taken to address it?

.....after you've discussed answers with your wider group, your facilitator will then feed them back to the Methodist Church

