**Walking with Micah – longer newsletter article (732 words)**

*Rachel Lampard, former leader of the Joint Public Issues Team, writes about the new Methodist project, Walking with Micah*

It’s hard to avoid the call to justice in the bible. I wonder what springs to mind for you? Perhaps it is the call of the prophets or the laws to protect widows, orphans and strangers. Or perhaps it’s the way in which Jesus deliberately overturned the world’s expectations, drawing the poorest and most marginalised into the centre. Or perhaps you are inspired by the vision of God’s Kingdom.

I, along with many others, have always been stirred by the words of the prophet Micah. When asked how God wanted his people to worship, to respond to God’s love, Micah replies:

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.

 And what does the Lord require of you?

To act justly and to love mercy

 and to walk humbly with your God.

Acting justly (as God does) and loving mercy (or loving in the way that God loves) are at the heart of becoming more like God. And we learn this by walking humbly alongside God.

For Christians, therefore, acting in ways that increase justice, promote fairness and right relationship, and tackle injustice is part of our discipleship. Indeed in *the Methodist Way of Life* we are asked to reflect regularly on how we have “challenged injustice”.

As Methodists we find this response to God’s love through acting justly present in our tradition. John Wesley, one of Methodism’s founders, was a vocal opponent of the slave trade and excoriated those who condemned the poor for being lazy without knowing or understanding them. The Tolpuddle Martyrs – many of whom were Methodist lay preachers - were early activists in the trade union movement. A disproportionate number of Methodists have served in Parliament. Sybil Phoenix OBE is one of many community activists and anti-racists. The work of All We Can, Action for Children and MHA speak powerfully of the commitment of Methodists to see justice for all people in God’s world.

What does “challenging injustice” look like in your own life? Methodists are involved in responding to needs in our communities or the world, through running debt advice centres, giving to foodbanks, raising money for charities, writing to political prisoners. Sometimes we use our consumer power, through buying fairtrade bananas or avoiding excess plastic wrapping. And through our protesting, writing letters to MPs or community organising we try to change problems at their source.

But as humans we find that “justice” isn’t a simple concept. Some things we can agree on – poverty isn’t good, people shouldn’t face discrimination because of their ethnicity, climate change is happening. The challenges often come when we get into more detail, or try to decide how to respond. Then there are some issues where there is little agreement at all. There are Christians in all the major political parties, for example, all trying to “do justice”. We have different lenses, priorities, experiences and understandings of what justice means and looks like.

So if we truly believe that we are called to “act justly” and to be a justice-seeking Church, then how can we recover our passion for justice amidst all the pressures we face, find ways of speaking and acting together, and make justice real in our communities?

The Methodist Church has set up – **Walking with Micah: Methodist Principles for Social Justice** – to explore what it means to be a justice-seeking church. Over the next two years, I will be working to help the Methodist Church to focus on our principles and priorities for justice, and through that increase our practical ability to seek God’s justice, as a Church and in our own Christian lives.

During this time I hope we can have a big conversation about justice, as we listen and learn from each other, from those experiencing injustice, and from others. What have we seen and learned about the need for justice today and during the pandemic? And what do we know from our history? How can we recover that passion for justice, and what practical tools do we need as individual and as a Church to live as a justice-seeking people of God?

To find out more about the project as it develops, watch the Methodist Justice Lecture by former Prime Minster, Gordon Brown, which launched the project, and sign up for updates about getting involved, visit <https://www.methodist.org.uk/walking-with-micah/>

**Walking with Micah – shorter newsletter article (366 words)**

*Rachel Lampard, formerly leader of the Joint Public Issues Team, writes about the new Methodist project, Walking with Micah*

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Justice is present in the bible, in our tradition, often in our lives, and yet we sometimes find it hard to see where it fits in our Church, especially when we disagree.

The Methodist Church has set up – **Walking with Micah: Methodist Principles for Social Justice** – to explore what it means to be a justice-seeking church and people. Over the next two years, we will listen and learn together, focusing on our principles and priorities for justice. Through this, I hope we can increase our practical ability to seek God’s justice, as a Church and in our own Christian lives.

I’m looking forward to a big conversation about justice this year. If you’re interested in getting involved visit <https://www.methodist.org.uk/walking-with-micah/>