

A Methodist Way of Life for November 2024  
**Challenge “We challenge injustice”**

### **We Remember**

November the 10th is Remembrance Sunday where we commemorate the contribution of British and Commonwealth military and civilian servicemen and women in the two World Wars and later conflicts. We remember with thankful hearts those who “challenged injustice and war” and made their ultimate sacrifice.

### **“It’s not fair”**

This is a common cry of two-year-olds and justice campaigners. Jesus told stories to people who live in a storytelling tradition, with stereotypical characters – landowners, workers, managers. In other parables we meet widows and judges, rich and poor, party hosts and party guests.

Often the story involves people of unequal power.

In Matthew’s Gospel chapter 20 we find the parable of The Labourers in the Vineyard. We think we know who the ‘goodies’ and ‘baddies’ are. Clearly the workers who have laboured all day have been cheated, because others who have worked for less hours are paid the same.

In this story, the one with power chooses to be generous and those who think they are entitled, ( those privileged because of health, strength, reputation, or who they know) find they are worth no more and no less than everyone else. This is a shock to them and results in that age old cry, “It’s not fair!”

The cry of fairness can be related to two things – fair opportunities or fair outcomes.

### **Fair Opportunities**

One common illustration of this difference is to imagine an adult and child trying to look over a fence. The adult is tall enough to look over, but the child is not. Fair opportunities treat all people equally – both people would be given a box to stand on. It would be wrong for us to say that “the child is too short”.

## **Fair Outcomes**

But standing on a box would not change the outcome – the child still cannot see. While all people are equally important to God, their circumstances are not. Fair outcomes would re-distribute all our resources to achieve equality – both boxes would be given to the child, so that both adult and child have the same view over the fence. Justice rooted in an understanding of God might go even further than ideas of fairness.

What if the fence was removed entirely, liberating everyone from structural constraints, so that all can have abundant access to what is beyond the fence? That's a better solution.

This story makes many of us uncomfortable because our default mode is to assume we must earn our way into God's love, or be good enough to pass some test of righteousness. No one can work hard enough or long enough to earn God's love. It is given – and we see that in Jesus Christ.

## **We are all equal in God's sight.**

As all people are created equally in the image of God, we must be mindful that inequality stems from social and institutional situations and our attitudes towards people, not by how they are made or loved by God.

## **Discrimination**

We like to think the world has changed, that things are fairer and more just. Yet in many contexts there are still people who are chosen last – considered to be of less worth because of discrimination. The moment human beings see others as worth less than themselves, injustice will follow. As an example, we see this when children, women and men die attempting to cross rivers and seas to claim asylum. As Christians, we recognise that every person is precious to God and calls on us to challenge discrimination and injustice.

## **We all have a part to play**

At the heart of most injustice is misuse of power and an attitude of scarcity – that there is only so much to go around, and “I lose if someone else gains”. This can be hard to challenge, particularly if we feel powerless to change anything. But though the deck may be stacked against us (or those near to us), we are all still able to act. It is never just someone else's responsibility. We all have a part to

play. And God entrusts those in power with a special responsibility for upholding justice.

### When did you last cry “It’s not fair!”?

- Was it because you found out that people in your community are going hungry?
- Was it because asylum seekers and refugees are left to live without the means to support themselves and their families because of Government policies?
- Was it because you saw a person treated unfairly because of their colour, sexuality, disability or gender?
- Was it because you, or someone close to you, was treated unjustly?

God, whose nature is just, yearns for justice in the world. What makes you want to challenge injustice?

### Key themes

- God is a liberator. God always takes the side of people experiencing poverty and injustice and we are called to do the same (Isaiah 28:6).
- Around the globe and in their own local communities, Methodists are working for justice through responding to needs and campaigning for change.
- Challenging injustice is never easy – it is rare for a challenge to be welcome.
- Challenging injustice is something we can do as individuals and by working together. It doesn’t have to be world-changing.
- It is important that we don’t see challenging injustice as an ‘us and them’ issue.

### A Call to Respond

We might pat ourselves on the back and say, “We have God’s grace, there is nothing left to do.” And, in terms of earning our salvation, we would be right. However, we know from Scripture that we are called to respond to God’s grace – as recipients of the gift, we are transformed by love and grace – God’s Spirit works within us to bring about a new life, a fuller life, a life in which it troubles us that others are treated unfairly.

God calls all people and nations actively to work for peace and justice, liberation and transformation. No one person can solve these issues alone, but we can work

out together how to respond to the injustice we see locally or globally – by letter writing, actions of generosity or joining campaigns. Each one of us can play a part in building the kingdom of heaven that Jesus described in the parable – not to earn our place there, but to celebrate that all are welcome.

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

### Discussion questions

- What do you think is ‘not fair’? (Depending on ages this could include anything from a friend who has more sweets than you, to warfare.)
- What issues of injustice or unfairness in your community and in the world (small and big) are you concerned about?
- What are you doing in response (as individual followers of Jesus and as a Methodist church community and family)?

### Ways to respond

- Visit [jointpublicissues.org.uk](http://jointpublicissues.org.uk) to find out more about how Methodists and other Christians are responding to injustice – and how you can get involved.
- Visit [allwecan.org.uk](http://allwecan.org.uk) to learn about how the Methodist relief and development charity addresses issues of injustice worldwide and find out how your church can give generously.
- Think and plan how to offer more support to Blandford’s Food Bank and the shop called “Nourish”? The food bank is supported by Faithworks who believe that no one should be alone on their journey when life is hard. Visit <https://faith-works.org.uk/>.
- We can always pray that God’s will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven.

Source: Abridged from “A Methodist Way Of Life” and then adapted for BMC.  
[www.methodist.org.uk/faith/a-methodist-way-of-life/](http://www.methodist.org.uk/faith/a-methodist-way-of-life/) Search “Challenge”.

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