

Resources for Churches...

Responding to the Coronavirus

Prejudice and Protest

Carolyn Urwin, minister of Latchford Baptist Church in Warrington, reflects and shares on some recent events:

“However we have been accessing worship this week, whether online with the NWBA, or via the BBC, these acts of worship have inevitably included comment on and prayer for the events that have dominated the news this week. In the absence of our church services, my mail out has to become the vehicle for us as a church to reflect together and be prompted to pray.

The death of George Floyd at the hands of the Minneapolis police force and the events that have followed have caused shock and dismay across the world. We have been rightly appalled by the brutal treatment he received in complete disregard for his humanity, and by the evidence that some within the police force still consider that upholding law and order legitimises an disproportionate use of violence.

In the same way that the coronavirus pandemic has highlighted our national devaluing of roles predominantly taken by people of colour (such as care home workers, porters, cleaners and refuse collectors, to name but a few), so his death is another, but graver, symptom of the devaluing of black people. His death has confronted us afresh with the regretful reality that racism and discrimination remain systemic in our society, and possibly therefore in our churches and even our own hearts. Whilst not condoning the actions of those who have resorted to violence and destruction as an outlet for their anger, we can see that the subsequent protests taking place across the world are a natural and appropriate reaction to not only this event, but to generation upon generation of oppression and mistreatment. We can applaud those who are choosing to make a stand, at not inconsiderable personal risk, against injustice, so their voices are heard as part of a global call that all such social inequalities should be named for what they are and addressed.

As followers of Jesus, we also should be saying black lives matter because all lives matter. Every human being is made in the image of God and precious to him. Every person deserves to be valued and treated with dignity. In the language of the moment, all people of all races, of every colour and of all faiths have the right to breathe. We should also want to speak out for truth and justice to prevail and recognise that God's call is still for us to administer true justice, show mercy and compassion to one another (Zechariah 7:9) and to act justly, love mercy and walk humbly with our God (Micah 6:8). So whilst we are not in a position to physically join in a protest gathering, we can add our voice in other ways e.g. by signing an online petition or writing to our MP and supporting groups calling for change. We can go out of our way to show loving kindness to those around us who are discriminated against, for whatever reason. We can examine our own attitudes and actions - asking ourselves do we treat everyone of equal value, who will we cross the road to talk to, who will we phone or message, who will we do a favour for this week (and who will we not)? And we can pray - for justice to flow like a river and righteousness like an ever-rolling stream (Amos 5:24); for peace between people and nations; for God's kingdom to come where his will is done on earth as it is in heaven (Matt 6:10). “



assumption of guilt based on someone's ethnicity and a

Resources for Churches...

...continued

God of justice, mercy and compassion,
we pray for our broken and divided world,
and for all who are victimised, overlooked or marginalised.

We ask you to comfort all those who are grieving,
heal all who are hurting and suffering,
grant peace to all who feel angry or betrayed,
strengthen the worn down and weary,
and give hope to those who are frustrated and despairing.

We pray that this would be the time when the tide is turned,
that all that mars your world and hurts your people would come to an end.

We pray for an end to oppression, discrimination and hatred,
that violence, abuse and corruption would cease.

May justice, righteousness and truth be upheld
and all be valued equally and treated with kindness.

We pray that we would be people who hate evil and love good.

Forgive us when subconscious prejudice influences our thoughts and actions,
when we fail to regard everyone as having equal worth,
and when we stay silent in the face of injustice.

May your Spirit in us help us to see others through your eyes of compassion and mercy,
and enable us to be your hands, your feet and your voice.

Give us courage to speak out against untruth and injustice
and stir us into actions of generosity and loving kindness,
that your kingdom might come and your will be done on earth as in heaven. Amen.

For further thought:

God's charge against his people spoken through the prophet Amos was:

But you have turned justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into bitterness (Amos 6:12).

Read Amos chapter 5 - what does it reveal about God's heart for justice?

Read Matt 5:1-12 slowly. Notice which parts you are particularly drawn to.

Ask yourself what attitudes does God want to invoke in you?

In what actions does he want you to know his blessing today?