



# Lent/Easter

MARCH / APRIL

## ***Food for fasting - Isaiah 58:6-7***

*"The kind of fasting I want is this...."*

The period from Ash Wednesday to Ascension takes the Christian congregation through all the highs and lows of life, from deep despair to ecstatic rejoicing. It also gives ample scope to those who want to reflect on what invigorates or stultifies human relationships and society itself.

In this part of the racial justice material are discussion starters, theological reflections and suggestions for practical activity that will enable groups large or small to mark Lent and Easter in a way that is rooted in God's inclusive purpose for all people.

### **MENU**

## **Appetisers**

### **Ways of weaving racial justice into Lent and Easter**

- Explore with your local rabbis the possibility of sharing the third seder meal as an inter-faith/inter-ethnic opportunity to meet.
- In order to broaden awareness of the wider church, research and mark the Orthodox Easter this year, perhaps as an ecumenical event.

## **Main courses**

### **Bible connections and theological themes**

#### **Psalm 51**

This Psalm is a prayer for forgiveness: use it to explore the forgiveness we need to seek as a result of racism and its effects. What faults and sins are we conscious of (v.3)? How may we seek sincerity and truth in this matter (v.6)? What might it mean to have God create in us a "pure heart" (v.10)? In racial justice terms, what might be "the joy that comes from your salvation" (v.12)? Why might "a humble and repentant heart" (v.17) be important?

#### **Micah 6:6-8**

With words very similar to those of Isaiah 58, Micah makes his famous statement about what God requires of his people. The answer, in a nutshell, is justice. Understandably, an anomaly exists between a church which is very keen on worship but which is slow to gain awareness of issues of justice, poverty, equality and so on in society, and where racial divisions persist among its own members. How can the church here and across the world put theology more clearly into practice?

Photos of vegetables: val'sphotos

Mae deunydd Cymraeg ar gael o [www.ctbi.org.uk/racialjusticesunday](http://www.ctbi.org.uk/racialjusticesunday)  
a [www.cytun.org.uk](http://www.cytun.org.uk)

**Churches Together in Britain and Ireland**



**Amos 5:21-24**

Amos might have been a better preacher than Micah, but the message is the same. In fact, Isaiah may well have borrowed his theme in Isa.58 from these earlier prophets. The terms “justice” and “righteousness” are almost identical in meaning and relate to a right relationship with God being dependent upon just relationships in society. Where in our society is justice denied? Why do some sections of the community consistently do worse in terms of wealth, education, healthcare, employment, crime, housing and so on? How is this linked to ethnic background, culture and language? How can Christians play their part in seeking justice for all?

**James 1:22-27**

It is not just the Hebrew scriptures that insist on justice being the true religion: here we find James taking up the same theme. The accent here is on the need for practical outcomes to hearing the word of God. Assuming that God’s word on racial justice is that all people are equal and should be equally free, and that fear, prejudice and racism must be overcome, what sort of practical outcomes are needed both in the world and among God’s people?

**Questions for discussion**

- What is the ‘fruit’ of your church – what does your church actually *do* – for families, individuals and groups in the local community?
- Which groups in our society suffer from injustice and oppression? How could we make our faith more “real” by engaging more effectively with this injustice?

## Chef’s specials

**Challenges for response by the congregation**

Responding to some of the questions for discussion (above), make a resolution to have a greater impact for justice in your community over the coming year. Set a series of simple, achievable milestones to help you check your progress.

**Ideas for young people**

Pick a current news story involving a particular ethnic community, or perhaps a hot topic like immigration. Compare media coverage in different newspapers, TV channels etc. To what extent are these stories presented as “racial” issues?

## Desserts

**Intercessions and petitions**

Pray for those suffering modern forms of slavery through people trafficking and economic exploitation