

IT'S TIME TO CLOSE THE GAP



BETWEEN RICH AND POOR

Fair Taxes worship

This worship outline was kindly prepared for us by Jo Love of the Wild Goose Resource Group.
(www.iona.org.uk/wgrg_home.php)

Introduction

Welcome the group to worship, and invite them to respond as they see fit to these opening statements... *(In the first section, VOICES 1 and 2 speak boldly and enthusiastically, emphasising the 'what' in each statement. When VOICE 3 comes in, he or she may wish to hold up a hand as a 'stop' gesture, and speak in complete contrast – thoughtful, deliberate, sobering. In the second section, from 'Right now in the UK...', 1 and 2 should be more serious. On the final statement from Voice 3, allow people to respond, without trying to 'resolve'.)*

VOICE 1 For the goods and services provided to benefit a nation, *what* do its citizens pay? **(TAX!)**

VOICE 2 Cutting *what* is disastrous for the wellbeing of a nation's citizens? **(TAX!)**

VOICE 1 *What* is the most important, the most beneficial, the most sustainable source of finance for development? **(TAX!)**

VOICE 2 In Africa, the revenue from *what* is worth ten times the value of foreign aid? **(TAX!)**

VOICE 1 The long-term goal of poor countries must be to replace foreign aid dependency with self-reliance on *what*? **(TAX!)**

VOICE 2 *What* is the lifeblood of the social contract? **(TAX!)**

VOICE 1 *What* is the nexus between state and citizen? **(TAX!)**

VOICE 2 Action on *what* is the key to lifting hundreds of millions of people out of poverty? **(TAX!)**

VOICE 3 The slogan of Kenya's revenue authorities sums it up perfectly – "Pay your TAXES and set your country free!"

VOICES 1&2 *(gesturing to all to repeat)* PAY YOUR TAXES AND SET YOUR COUNTRY FREE! PAY YOUR TAXES AND SET YOUR COUNTRY FREE! PAY YOUR TAXES AND SET YOUR COUNTRY FREE!

VOICE 1 *(interrupting, silencing chorus)* And yet... right now in the UK,

VOICE 2 *What* are the poor paying proportionately more than the rich? **(TAX!)**

VOICE 1 *What* is big business failing to adequately pay? **(TAX!)**

VOICE 2 If left unchanged, by 2014, *what* will big business be paying at rates LOWER than ANY small business or individual? **(TAX!)**

VOICE 1 *What* is EVADED at the cost of £70 billion, AVOIDED at a cost of £25 billion, and LEFT UNPAID at a cost of another £25 billion? **(TAX!)**

VOICE 3 And *how* is the government dealing with this missing £120 billion?

Bible reading

James 2:14–17

Silence

(Followed by invitation to pray in song...

Song: ‘Inspired by Love and Anger’

Words & arrangement John L. Bell & Graham Maule. © 1987 WGRG, Iona Community, Glasgow G2 3DH, Scotland.

1. Inspired by love and anger, disturbed by need and pain,
informed of God’s own bias, we ask him once again:
“How long must some folk suffer? How long can few folk mind?
How long dare vain self-interest turn prayer and pity blind?”
2. From those forever victims of heartless human greed,
their cruel plight composes a litany of need:
“Where are the fruits of justice? Where are the signs of peace?
When is the day when prisoners and dreams find their release?”
3. From those forever shackled to what their wealth can buy,
the fear of lost advantage provokes the bitter cry,
“Don’t query our position! Don’t criticise our wealth!
Don’t mention those exploited by politics or stealth!”
4. To God, who through the prophets proclaimed a different age,
we offer earth’s indifference, its agony and rage:
“When will the wronged be righted? When will the kingdom come?
When will the world be generous to all instead of some?”
5. God asks, “Who will go for me? Who will extend my reach?
And who, when few will follow, will prophecy and preach?
And who when few bid welcome, will offer all they know?
And who, when few dare follow, will walk the road I show?”

Action

At this point, you might ask people to take some practical action, or make a commitment to do so – for example, Pledging to take part in monthly e-actions as part of the Close the Gap campaign. (See www.church-poverty.org.uk/act for more ideas.)

Affirmation of Faith

(A and B can be men/women, or two halves of those gathered, or those who earn above and below the median income for the UK... or whatever!)

- A:** We believe that God hopes and works for a world where all shall be included in the feast of life,
and that in Christ we shall see how costly it is to bring that world about.
- B:** We believe that God's strategy for a new world is to put the poorest first,
and that nothing is more important for God's people than to bring the poor good news.
- A:** We believe that rich and poor alike can be generous, wise and creative
because all are made in God's image, and that all are made poorer when
any are left out.
- B:** We acknowledge that we use our strength to protect ourselves
and order the world to benefit the rich and not the poor;
and that none of us can be trusted with too much power over others.
- A:** We believe that loving our neighbours means working for justice
so that all have a say in what happens to them.
- B:** We believe that God made the good earth to sustain and delight us
and that we are all called to take care of it and enjoy it.
- A:** We believe that the God of the earth is at work beyond the churches as
well as within them, making common cause with all who act to defeat
inequality.
- B:** We long for the time when the meek shall inherit the earth
and all who hunger and thirst after justice shall be satisfied.
- ALL:** **And we believe that despite the persistence of evil,
now is always the time when more good can be done
and we can make a difference.**

Adapted from the Iona Abbey Worship Book

Song: 'This We Shall Do'

This we shall do,
this we shall do
act justly, love mercy,
walk humbly with our God.

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Closing prayer

Jesus invites us to a way of celebration,
meeting and feasting with the humble and poor.
Let us walk his way with joy.

Jesus beckons us to a way of risk,
letting go of our security.
Let us walk his way with joy.

Jesus challenges us to listen
to the voices of those who have nothing to lose.
Let us walk his way with joy.

Jesus points us to a way of self-giving,
where power and status are overturned.
Let us walk his way with joy.

Jesus calls us to follow the way of the cross,
where despair is transformed by the promise of new life.
Let us walk his way with joy.

By Jan Berry, taken from Bread of Tomorrow (edited by Janet Morley, SPCK)