



Module 6: Just Prayer and Spirituality



Aims of the module

- To explore what a just spirituality might be in your situation.
- To find ways in which as a group and as individuals you can live out that just spirituality.



Notes for group leaders

There are several alternative activities presented at various points in this module. Be sure to read through the materials in advance, decide which options you will be using, and prepare any resources you will need.

The worship resources in this module include a selection of justice-related prayers, as well as the outlines for opening and closing worship. You can use these prayers at other points during the session if you like, or in other sessions or worship.



Extras

There are two Extras available from www.justchurch.info to accompany this module:

- A set of **extra activity ideas and resources** which can be used in place of the activities and readings suggested here, or for further exploration of just prayer and spirituality.
- A **personal reflection sheet** which you might give people to take home with them so that they can read and reflect further.

Remember, you can run the module without using the Extras at all. Only use them if you want to explore the topic more deeply.



Resources required

- Bibles – with Old and New Testament.
- Paper, A4 size – for some of the activities.
- Copies of Handouts 1 and 2 if you choose the “Spirituality and Friendship” option.
- Pens or pencils.
- Internet access or newspapers if you choose the “Pray the News” option.



Opening worship (10 minutes)

If you have an overhead projector, or PowerPoint on a laptop and a projector, then you can use the slideshow entitled “Opening Worship presentation for Just Prayer and Spirituality”, available from the **Just Church** DVD or the multimedia section of www.justchurch.info. (If you don’t have these resources, you could still print out the pictures from the slides and use them as a focus, or just say the **Just Church** prayer together.)

Watch the slideshow together, perhaps with quiet music playing in the background, and read out the prayer from the worship resources for this module. Then light a candle or do something else that signals you are to begin the session, pause and share in this sentence or some other brief prayer together:

God of life, begin what we do, inform what we say, redeem who we are.

The images in the slideshow should speak for themselves, but here are some notes in case you want to explain them or people have questions:

- **Ernst Barlach’s sculpture of a Russian beggar.** All over the world there are victims of oppression, people without “faces”, names or dignity. Society has forced them into situations in which they lose their right to self determination and “life”. These people are throughout our global village and include: sex workers in the Philippines; destitute asylum seekers; people taken into slavery in Darfur; child soldiers in the Congo; those in debt-bondage in the Indian sub-continent; etc.
Ernst Barlach (1870–1936) was a German sculpture and writer who was known for his sculptures protesting against war. His work was banned by the Nazi Party.
- **Käthe Kollwitz’s lithographs.** The hungry subsist below the minimum standards for life and are reduced to utter poverty and powerlessness. Thousands of people know daily the horrors depicted in these lithographs: the desperation of poverty including the utter incomprehension and vulnerability of sick children and the misery of a helpless parent.
Käthe Kollwitz (1867–1945) was a German painter and sculptor who demonstrated in her work an empathy for the victims of poverty, hunger, and war. She experienced much personal suffering including persecution by the Nazi regime.
- **Fritz Eichenberg’s woodcut “Christ of the Breadlines”.** Fritz Eichenberg was closely associated with the Catholic Worker movement founded by Dorothy Day which sought to support the poor. Eichenberg is particularly known for his work for the *Catholic Worker* newspaper, in which this work originally appeared.



Activity 1: What is a just spirituality? (30 minutes)

Reading

Ask someone to read out Micah 6:6–8.

Reflection

Read out the following quotations:

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart ... and your neighbour as yourself.”

“Spirituality is about our awareness of God.”

“Christian spirituality is our awareness of God as we encounter and know him in Jesus Christ.”

“Through Jesus and the prophets of the Old Testament we come to realise that the nature of God has to do with love and justice.”

Just Church: facilitator sheet

“When we ask that our neighbour be shown love and not be treated unjustly, we are living out our spirituality and affirming the love of God.”

“In seeking justice we meet Christ in others and discover the essential connection between prayer and social action.”

Follow-up questions

- Do these quotations connect with your own understanding of spirituality?
- Share with each other and jot down key words that say something about your own understanding of spirituality.
- Is spirituality often used as a way of avoiding and evading the demands of the world?
- What is the connection between prayer and action?
- Can you come up with a sentence that contains for your group the essence of what a just spirituality might be? You may like to review this at the end of the session!



Activity 2: Friendship and partnership (20 minutes)

Choose **ONE** of the following activities:

Option 1: Spirituality and friendship

This activity is based on one from Acting in Solidarity by Anthony Reddie.

Give everyone a copy of Handout 1, with the series of concentric circles. Tell them:

In the central circle write down the names of the people to whom you are closest to; in the next circle out, write the names of those whom you are close to after those in the central circle; keep adding circles until all the names of those you associate with are placed in one of the circles.

The smaller the circle, the closer you are to those people.

- How many of the people in your circles are like you in some way? How?
- How many are different? How?

Now give everyone Handout 2. Ask them to look at the list of people Jesus knew, and place the people in the circles around Jesus as they did for their own associations.

- What do you notice about the kinds of people Jesus was close to?
- How does it compare to your own circles of friendship?

or

Option 2: Partnership, or “There but for the grace of God”!

Reading

The Lord said

“Say, ‘We’”

But I shook my head,

Hid my hands tight behind my back, and said

Stubbornly,

“I”.

The Lord said

“Say, ‘We’”

But I looked upon them, grimy and all awry.

Myself in all those twisted shapes? Ah, no!

Distastefully I turned my head away,

Persisting,

“They”.

Just Church: facilitator sheet

The Lord said,
“Say, ‘We’”
And I
At last
Richer by a hoard
Of years
And tears,
Looked in their eyes and formed the heavy word
That bent my neck and lowed my head:
Like a shamed schoolboy then I mumbled low,
“We
Lord”.

Karle Wilson Baker

Reflection

“There but for the grace of God” – this old saying can sound rather self-righteous, yet it makes a valid point that the other person and I are far more alike than I sometimes would care to admit!

Christine Feldman wrote: “‘I’ and ‘You’, us and them, winning and losing, victor and vanquished – these are no more than the tricks of the mind exiled from the heart.”

Follow-up questions

- What are some of the struggles we experience in trying to live out a “just spirituality”?
- What might help us in our desire to act justly and lovingly towards all of creation?

Activity 3: Just prayer (20 minutes)

Choose **ONE** of the following activities:

Option 1: Haiku prayers

Working alone, or in small groups, write a prayer asking for God’s help as we try to build justice in the world. You might like to use the *haiku* form for these prayers.

The *haiku* prayer should have three lines for each verse with:
five syllables (beats) in line 1;
seven syllables (beats) in line 2;
five syllables (beats) in line 3.

For example:

We ask you O God
To help us build a world where
All can find a home.

or

Option 2: Pray the news

Have a number of newspapers or current affair magazines, e.g. *The Big Issue*, or if possible show the news via the internet or TV.

Ask people to write prayers following their viewing or reading of the news. Spend some time sharing in those prayers together.



Just Church: facilitator sheet

or

Option 3: Giving thanks

Individually or in small groups, make a list of all you are grateful for. As you reflect on each item, ask God how you might use that gift in service to others.



Action points (10 minutes)

Help the group to decide how they can put their learning into some sort of action. Ask: How can our congregation make just spirituality an ongoing part of our life as a church? Which areas are we already doing well at, and which areas need improvement?

Be sure to note down the ideas that emerge – you'll come back to them in the "Just Action" module.

If you've downloaded the Extras, you might like to give people a copy of Extra 2 to take away and use as an ongoing personal reflection/prayer (i.e. homework!)



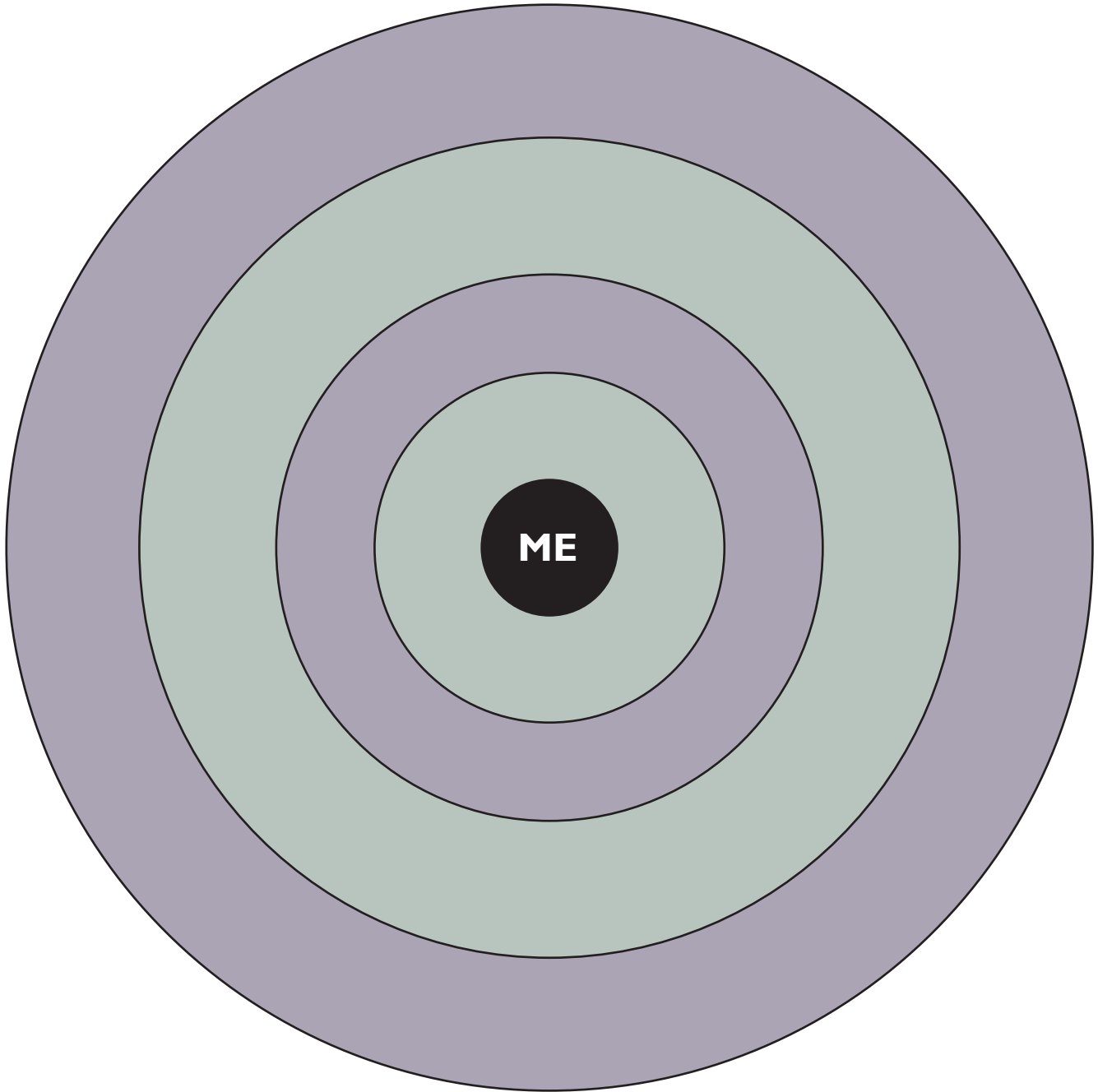
Closing worship (10 minutes)

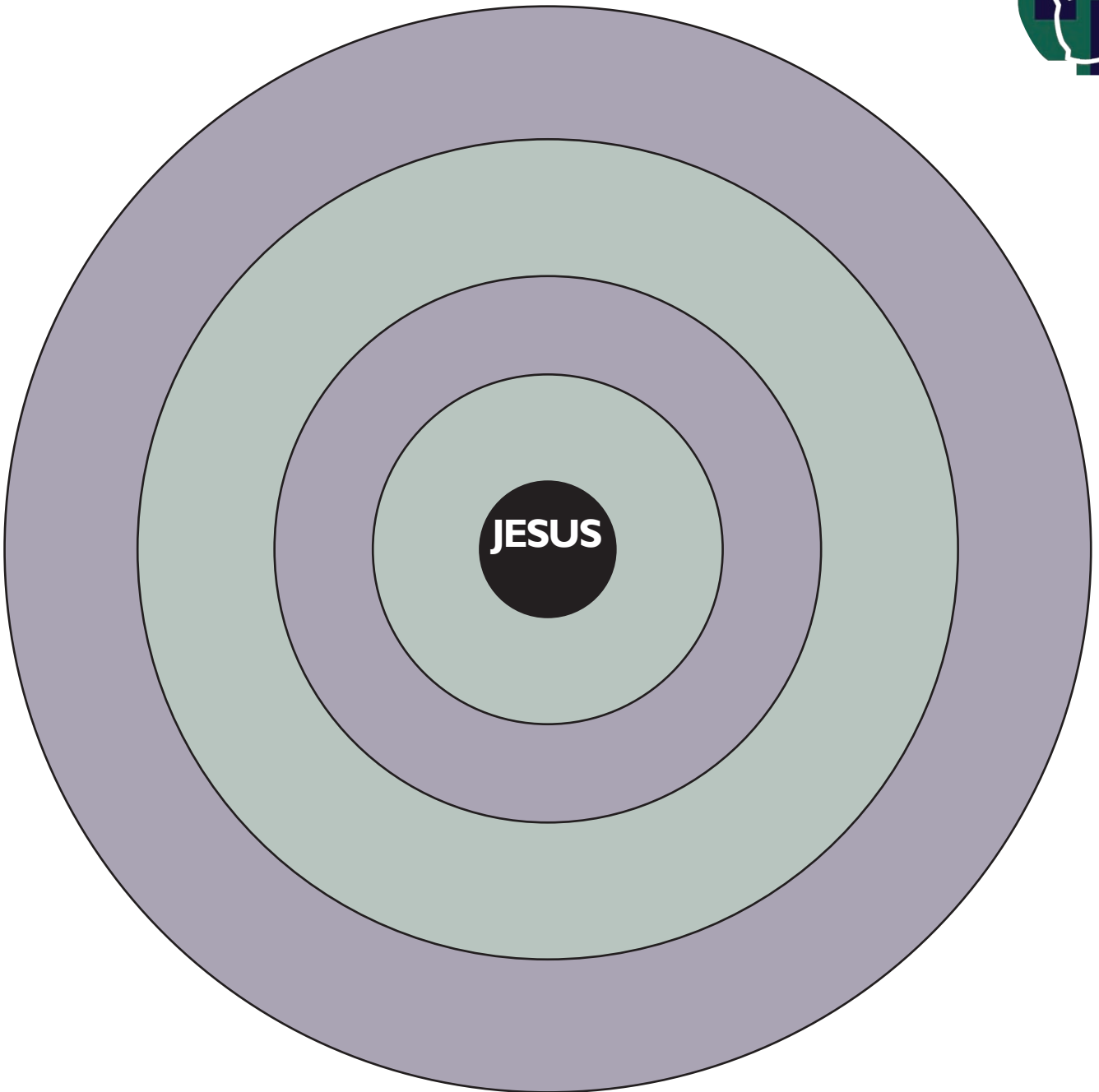
Use the outline for a service with the washing of feet, from the worship section of this module, or other **Just Church** worship resources. You might also want to say the **Just Church** prayer (see the introduction) together to end the session.



Handout 1: My circles of friendship

Just Spirituality





Place these people who associated with Jesus in the appropriate circles, as you did for your own friends:

- Mary Magdalene (*Matthew 28*)
- The woman accused of adultery (*John 8*)
- The disciples (*Mark 6*)
- Matthew the tax collector (*Matthew 9*)
- Zacchaeus (*Luke 19*)
- John the Baptist (*Matthew 3*)
- The robber on the cross (*Luke 23*)
- God (*Luke 11*)
- The lepers (*Luke 17*)
- The woman with a haemorrhage (*Matthew 9*)
- The madman (*Matthew 8*)
- Jairus (*Mark 5*)
- Martha (*Luke 10*)
- Mary (*John 12*)
- Lazarus (*John 11*)
- Joseph of Arimathea (*Matthew 27*)



Opening worship

*You could display some artistic images of poverty during the opening worship to help us recall their presence: a beggar, hungry and sick children with their mother, Christ among the poor. There is a PowerPoint presentation on the **Just Church** DVD or website that you can use for this purpose.*

Leader: Too often we speak about the poor and the powerless in their absence.
Why are they so silent?

All: Because they are oppressed.

Leader: Why do they not “live”?

All: Because they are downtrodden.

Leader: Why do they have no names?

All: Because they are dispossessed.

Leader: Why are there so many children and women?

All: Because they are the most vulnerable.

Leader: Who is that in their midst?

All: It is the Lord.



Closing worship

Introduction

Read out:

In the washing of feet and in offering himself for death on a cross Jesus shows himself to be self-sacrificing, self-giving whatever the cost. These are equally the demands of our own discipleship – that we be “men and women for others” and not self-centred in our action. All that we have and are is a gift from God, given to be shared.

Introductory rites

Start by singing “Servant Song”, replacing the usual opening line with the more inclusive “Will you let me be your servant” or “Brother, sister let me serve you”.

The following is an extract from a longer Service of the Washing of Feet as used by the Liverpool community of L’Arche in Iona Abbey in 1998. It is published in full in Holy Ground (© L’Arche Community, Wild Goose Publications, ISBN 1-901557-88-X). Used with permission of Wild Goose Publications.

Prayer before the washing of feet

All powerful and ever-living God,
we do well always and everywhere to give you thanks,
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
You sent your Son to live among us
so that we might learn from him humility and obedience.
His nature was divine, yet he did not cling to equality with God,
but emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave.
He became as we are and was humbler yet,
accepting death, even death on a cross.
But you, Father, raised him high,
and gave him a name that is above all names,
so that we can acclaim “Jesus is Lord” to your honour and glory.

Acclamation: Holy, holy

If your congregation has a familiar setting of the “Sanctus”, use that, or perhaps better consider a responsorial version so that all can join the song.

Ever-loving God,
we thank you for the gift of Jesus your Son,
for the example he gave us of love and service,
for his promise to be with those who love and follow him.
Having loved his own, he loved them to the end.

On the night before he gave his life for us,
knowing that you had put everything into his hands,
he met with his disciples and gave them his new commandment:

Love one another as I have loved you.

Getting up from the table, he took a towel and water,
washed his disciples’ feet, and said:

I have given you an example.

**You are to do for one another
what I have done for you.**

As we remember Jesus, his life, his love even unto death,
his desire for our unity in his love, his resurrection,



we rejoice that he has given us his Spirit
to be his hands and body now in the world.

May the Holy Spirit create in us
the mind that was in Christ Jesus
to enable us to love and live as he did,
without counting the cost,
to desire a unity in love as he did, without losing heart.

**Heal the broken body of humanity,
the broken body of your church.**

Father, we know ourselves to be weak and vulnerable,
We too are poor,
but it is in our poverty and brokenness that you come to us,
and reveal the depths of your love.

For all this we give you thanks through Jesus Christ your Son
Who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit
One God for ever and ever.

Amen *(Sing the Amen if possible.)*

The washing of feet

Depending on the numbers attending there may need to be several bowls of water and towels provided in different parts of the worship space.

The leader(s) begins by washing the feet of whoever comes forward. The one whose feet have been washed then places a hand on the head of the person who has done the washing. They pray silently and briefly together.

Then the one who had their feet washed washes the feet of the next person. And so on, until the last person washes the feet of the leaders.

Lord's Prayer

Say or sing the "Our Father" together.

Blessing and sharing of the peace

May the Lord bless you and keep you

Amen

May the Lord let his face shine upon you
and be gracious to you

Amen

May the Lord God uncover his face to you
and bring you peace.

Amen

I invite you to share with each other a sign of peace
and then go and be the "men and women for others"
you are called to be.



Some prayers

Righteous God,
You plead the cause
Of the poor and unprotected.
Fill us with holy rage
When justice is delayed,
And give us the persistence
To require those rights that are denied;
In your name's sake. Amen

Janet Morley, All Desires Known

In the face of all our realities:
We are the people, who heal each other,
Who grow strong together,
Who name the truth,
Who know what it means
To live in community,
Moving towards a common dream
For a new heaven and a new earth
In the power of the love of God,
In the company of Jesus Christ
And the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Dorothy McRae-McMahon, Echoes of our journey

For the hungry and the overfed
May we have enough.
For the mourners and the mockers
May we laugh together.
For the victims and the oppressors
May we share power wisely.
For the peacemakers and warmongers
May clear truth and stern love lead us to harmony.
For the silenced and the propagandists
May we speak our own words in truth.
For the unemployed and the overworked
May our impress on the earth be kindly and creative.
For the troubled and the sleek
May we live together as wounded healers.
For the homeless and the cosseted
May our homes be simple, warm and welcoming.
For the vibrant and the dying
May we all die to live.
For rich and poor, young and old
May we live as equal partners.
For black, Asian and white
May we remember our common humanity.
For male and female, gay and straight
May we celebrate together.
For agnostic, believer and critic
May we respect and listen to each other
For Hindu, Buddhist and Jew, Muslim, Sikh and Christian,
May we be one in the friendship of God.



Jesus make us explorers, give us sight of your footsteps to follow,
Liberate us to live within your Spirit.
Jesus lead us beyond the familiar and the certain into new territories.
Jesus hold us in the turning.

Russell Maltby, a Greeting in The Agenda, Wesley Deaconess Order Dec 1940

Holy, transforming Spirit, you call us
From fear to faithfulness
From clutter to clarity
From desire to control to deeper trust
From the refusal to love to a readiness to risk.
Clear the way in us, your people,
That we might all know the beauty and power and danger of the Gospel.

Part of a prayer by Joan Puls & Gwen Cashmore



Just Church feedback form

Thank you for using the **Just Church** programme. We hope you have found it useful, challenging and inspiring.

We will continue to develop new **Just Church** resources and ways of using the programme. We would very much value feedback from churches using the programme, to help us improve the materials and make them more useful.

When you have finished running your **Just Church** programme, please complete this form and return it to Church Action on Poverty.

Church or group name: _____

Denomination (or is it ecumenical?): _____

What type of group ran the programme? (Was it a house group, a Justice and Peace group, a special group for **Just Church, or something else?)**

Contact name: _____

Contact number or email address: _____

What was the size of your group? _____

How often did you meet? _____

How long did you meet for? _____

Which modules did you use?

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Just Getting Started | <input type="checkbox"/> Just Jesus | <input type="checkbox"/> Just Bible |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Just Congregation | <input type="checkbox"/> Just Worship | <input type="checkbox"/> Just Prayer & Spirituality |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Just Children | <input type="checkbox"/> Just Community | <input type="checkbox"/> Just Living |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Just Money | <input type="checkbox"/> Just Transformation | <input type="checkbox"/> Just Action |

What action did you take, or plan to take, as a result of running a **Just Church programme?**

How useful did you find the elements of the programme?

Please rate each element out of 10, with 1 being poor and 10 being excellent, and add any other comments you have.

Guidance for facilitators

Rating: _____/10

Comments: _____

Worship and prayer materials

Rating: _____/10

Comments: _____

Group activities

Rating: _____/10

Comments: _____

'Extras' (if you used them)

Rating: _____/10

Comments: _____

DVD and multimedia content (if you used it)

Rating: _____/10

Comments: _____

Monthly ebulletin (if you received it)

Rating: _____/10

Comments: _____

Would you like to make any other comments?

CAP would be very happy to send a speaker to your group, support you in your ongoing work, or attend a Just Church covenant service if you hold one. Please tick here if you would like us to contact you about any of this.