

Sunday 19th January 2025: 2nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

For use by the Central Norfolk Circuit at 10.30 am or some other suitable time.

Theme for today is “Remembering the birth of Martin Luther King Jr”

Prepared by Anna Hall one of our Local Preachers in training.

Our call to worship:

Come, you who thirst for grace.
Come, you who hunger for justice
Come, you who are a stranger in a strange land
Come, for Christ welcomes you to this time and place
We have come to worship God
Then let us worship well and together, in his name

Hymn: At the name of Jesus, every knee shall bow (StF 317)

Introduction:

Today I wish to focus on justice and life of Martin Luther King jr. He was born on the 15th of January in 1929. To mark and celebrate love and justice held together.

So, when we think of Martin Luther king Jr we often think of his most famous speech ‘I had a dream...’, symbolising the hope of a free world of all. This speech is summarised in the hymn from the methodist website by Pamela J Pettit.

We say together as our opening prayer.

“I have a dream”, a man once said,
“where all is perfect peace;
where men and women, black and white,
stand hand in hand, and all unite
in freedom and in love.”

But in this world of bitter strife
the dream can often fade;
reality seems dark as night,
we catch but glimpses of the light
Christ sheds on humankind.

Fierce persecution, war, and hate
are raging everywhere;
God calls us now to pay the price
through struggles and through sacrifice
of standing for the right.

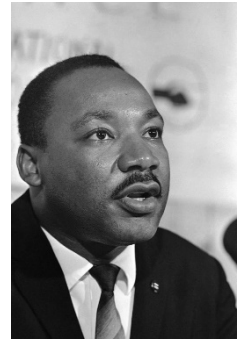
So, dream the dreams and sing the songs,
but never be content:
for thoughts and words don’t ease the pain:
unless there’s action, all is vain;
faith proves itself in deeds.

Lord, give us vision, make us strong,
help us to do your will;
don’t let us rest until we see
your love throughout humanity
uniting us in peace.

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Bible readings: Psalm 36: 5-10 and 1 Corinthians 12: 1-11

Hymn He is Lord, He is Lord (StF 317)



Reflection

The readings today reflect on justice being a spiritual gift from God born of the holy spirit, and one which everyone deserves and has a right to. We still live in a world where justice is severely lacking, don't we. We are remembering the life of Martin Luther King jr. and his struggles for justice within America and in fact the whole world, has it ever changed? We continually pray for justice in the world, but what does it mean? The definition of justice is the great and Wikipedia says 'Justice in its broadest sense is the concept that individuals are to be treated in a manner that is equitable and fair.

We know that justice is a big topic, and that the life of Dr King is a powerful illustration of what it looks like when a person is committed to wrestling with some of life's biggest topics—love and justice, being and doing, prayerful waiting and decisive, loving action in the world—until they come together as an integrated whole.

As we celebrate the life and work of Dr King, it is important to keep in mind that it was King's keen spiritual insight and atonement with the heart of God that made it possible for him to know what many Christians and other well-meaning individuals had somehow avoided knowing—that racism and racial injustice are an offense to the heart of God and contradict the essence of the Gospel. "For there is no longer Jew or Greek...slave or free...male and female; for all of you are one in Christ." (Galatians 3:28)

We need to focus on real encounters with God. It is doing what God calls us to do when he calls us to do it—no matter how afraid or ill-equipped we might feel.

- Reflecting on your own life and experience, where have you witnessed examples of injustice?
- How have you reacted? Have you felt empowered to stand up and challenge injustice where you have experienced it? Or have you left it to somebody else?
- Where you gain your insight, wisdom, and courage to make a difference in the world?

Hymn: The Church's one foundation (StF 690)

Prayers of Intercession

God of love, we give you thanks for all those whose work proclaim your love, we pray for all those who are working for Racial Justice in the world. We thank you for what has already been achieved and entrust the challenges of the future into your care.

God of grace sometimes we are indifferent to the needs of our brothers and sisters in particular those whose names we do not know, those in far off lands, those who are the victims of wars, those who live in poverty and those who have been left homeless because of recent fires and floods. We ask you to help us overcome any uncaring attitudes in situations that require concrete human response to the need for food, clothing or shelter. Help us not to be indifferent to the needs of others, and where all we can do is pray, we trust in your loving mercy to be in the places where you are needed the most.

Generous God, we acknowledge that we are all part of the changing face of the people called Christians in the world today. We acknowledge that we live in a diverse nation and a diverse world. Help us not to be defined by our nationality, colour, or culture, but help us to serve the communities in whose life we share and to make them truly welcoming to all.

We name those who concern us today....

Help all of those in need we pray and may your love prevail where you are needed the most.

Amen

Offer to God your offertory for the week, and say the Lord's Prayer...

Hymn: Praise my soul, the King of heaven

Closing blessing –

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. (*Romans 15:13*)