



Module 11: Just Transformation



Aims of this module

- To reflect on wider issues of power and injustice within society, and our responsibility for engaging with them.



Notes for group leaders

The group is asked to look at one area of social injustice in Britain and the surrounding factors that have a positive or negative influence on that issue. By the end of the module there should be a desire to go from thinking about the surrounding factors of the issue that has been chosen, to taking action.



Resources required

- Flipchart with marker pen.
- Copies of the handouts for everyone, with the roles and bank notes cut out ready for distribution.
- A table and chair for the role-play.
- A Bible for the opening and closing worship.
- Copies of the opening and closing worship.



Extras

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

- A **role-play activity** based around a church trying to help an asylum-seeker. You could use this in place of Activity 1, or to extend the session and explore different aspects of the theme.
- A sheet with a **story** showing how our actions can transform situations of injustice. You might want to hand this out to everyone at the end of the session, so that they can take it home for reflection and inspiration.

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

Just Church: facilitator sheet



Opening worship (5 minutes)

Use the worship resources at the end of this module, or plan your own worship.



Activity 1: Role-play (25 minutes)

This role-play is based on the Parable of the Vineyards (Matthew 20). (If your group prefers not to do role-plays, you could adapt the materials and run it as a more straightforward Bible study instead.)

Ask people to volunteer for – or allocate – the roles of Landowner and Foreman, and divide the rest of the group into three groups of workers. Hand out the role descriptions (Handout 1), give the foreman the cash (Handout 2), and give people three or four minutes to read them and get into role.

It is the end of a hot day's work on the Landowner's fruit farm. Ask the Landowner and Foreman to sit at the table, and to invite forward in turn each group of workers to receive their pay. Allow the role-play to continue for six or seven minutes, then pause it, and ask each group separately to discuss how they feel about the situation for three or four minutes.

Bring the whole group together to share their reactions to the role-play. Then ask someone to read the Parable of the Vineyard story from Matthew 20.

Lastly, spend some time discussing:

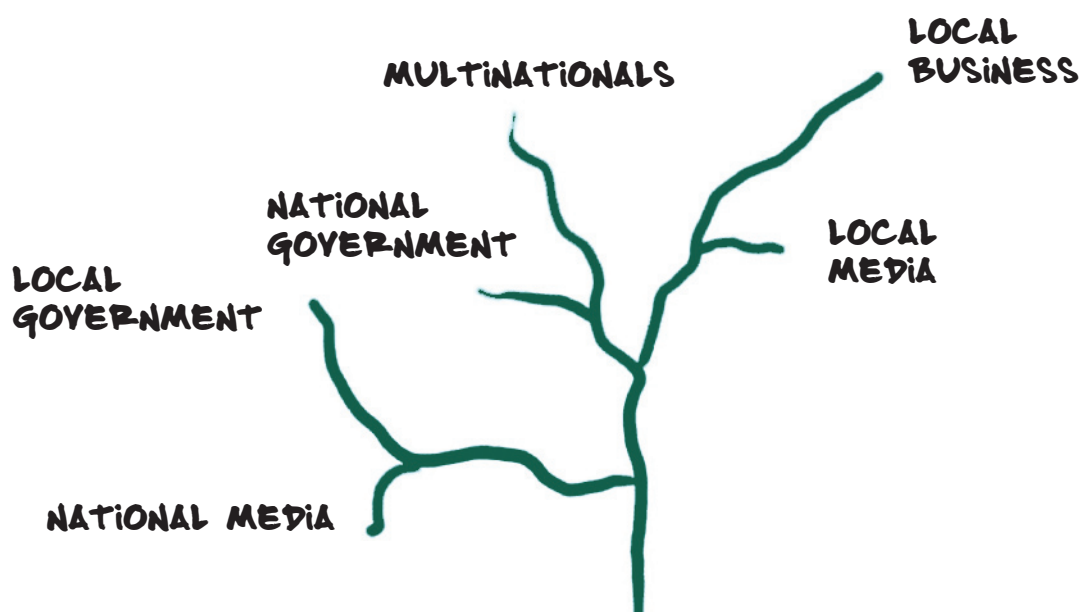
- What is Jesus trying to say in the story about God's understanding of justice?
- What is the relevance of this story for the world today?



Activity 2: The river (20 minutes)

Pass around a copy of Handout 3, the story of the babies being thrown into the river and having to go upstream to solve the problem. Some of the group may have seen this story before.

The handout is structured as a play. There is the narrator – who may or may not be the group facilitator – and two other short parts that willing volunteers can take up. It is structured as a drama so as to help people remain interested.



Just Church: facilitator sheet

After finishing the story, break the group up into twos and get them to consider the two questions for 10 minutes each. After 20 minutes, bring everyone back into the group and invite them to share some of their answers, especially to question 2.

What is upriver for you? Use a flipchart and draw a river on it like the one opposite. Ask the group to think of examples of what they might find if they travelled up the river, and write them on the flipchart. An example of what they might say is shown in the picture. Or they might come up with totally different examples.

Then ask the group to reflect on the examples they came up with. What impact do these examples have on the issue? How would things up the river have to change to address the issue?



Activity 3: Transforming power (20 minutes)

Hand out copies of Handout 4, the press cutting from the *Methodist Recorder*. Ask the group to read the story and to discuss what they think about it.

- Was it appropriate for the local Methodist minister to “publicly challenge” the MP to meet with asylum-seekers?
- What do you think was significant about the meeting being at Revd Flower’s home, and including refugees and asylum-seekers but not the media?
- What changed as a result of the meeting?

Now ask the group to read and discuss the quotation from Robert Linthicum on the handout.

- Ask members of the group if they can think of situations in which they felt powerful. How did it feel? Was it constructive or destructive?
- Discuss as a group whether you would feel able to publicly challenge your own MP to a dialogue about an issue important to the group.



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 be a source of just transformation in the world? 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.



Closing worship (5 minutes)

Invite someone from the group to read out the Bible passage for the final worship (the passage is listed on the closing worship handout). You might also want to say the **Just Church** prayer (see the introduction) together to end the session.



Handout 1: Role-play characters

Landowner

You own a fruit farm and have a business to run and are faced with the normal pressures of the agricultural sector. You also want to operate on the basis of ethical principles of justice and generosity. However, you don't take to dissent from your staff too kindly.

At this time of year, as well as your usual workforce, you also have also taken on some casual staff to help with fruit-picking – and today also a group of migrant workers.

You are a good Christian, and conscious that all of your workers are of equal worth in the eyes of God. Today you are going to try out a new approach to paying staff – equal pay. You have decided to pay all your workers £100 for the day, regardless of how many hours they work.

Foreman

You work on a fruit farm owned by a local landowner, whom you have worked for for many years. Your role as Foreman is to deal with all the staff, handle wages, etc. and to try and get the best out of a very mixed workforce.

As this is fruit picking season, your usual long-standing workers are currently putting in 12-hour days, for which they are paid well by local standards – £100 a day.

You also have also taken on some locals on a part-time basis to help with fruit-picking (afternoons only). Today, at the landowners' request, you also took on a group of migrant workers as well – although they only managed an hour's work at the end of the day.

Workers – 1

You are proud and skilled agricultural workers, and come from hard-working local families. You all work on a farm owned by a good and generous local landowner, for whom most of you have worked for a number of years – and who, by all accounts, pays well. Although the work at this time of year – fruit picking – is hard and long (11–12 hours a day), you can expect to take home around £100 a day.

Workers – 2

You are all locals in your early twenties – brought up in this mainly agricultural area, and just starting to make your own way in the world. Several of your friends have left the area, but you've stayed around. There isn't much work locally, but today you were taken on part-time (afternoons only) to help with fruit picking on a farm owned by a local landowner. He's offered to pay you the going rate – which you think might be up to £100 a day, but you're not entirely sure.

Workers – 3

You are all from the Czech Republic – and have come to the UK hoping to get some farm work to boost your families' earnings, as there is not enough work back home and the pay is very poor. Things aren't going well. However, today you were taken on to work on a local fruit picking farm on a casual basis. By the time you got there you only managed to do one hour's work – and you aren't sure what the pay is going to be, but you're glad that you've at least found some work.



The Just Bank

£100

It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God.



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Handout 3: Story

N Once upon a time there was a small village on the edge of a river. The people there were good and life in the village was good. One day a villager noticed a baby floating down the river. The villager quickly jumped into the river and swam out to save the baby from drowning. The next day this same villager was walking along the river bank and noticed two babies in the river. He called for help, and both babies were rescued from the swift waters. The following day four were seen caught in turbulent current. And then eight, then more, and still more. The villagers organised themselves quickly, setting up watchtowers and training teams of swimmers who could resist the swift waters and rescue the babies. Rescue squads were soon working 24 hours a day. And each day the number of helpless babies increased. The villagers organised themselves efficiently. The rescue squads were now snatching many children each day. Groups were trained to give mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Others prepared formula and provided clothing for the chilled babies. Many, particularly elderly women, provided foster homes and placement. One day, however, someone raised the question,

A “But where are all the babies coming from? Who is throwing them in the river? Why? Let’s organise a team to go upstream and see who’s doing it.”

N The seeming logic of the elders countered:

B “And if we go upstream who will operate the rescue operations? We need every concerned person here.”

A “But don’t you see, if we find out who is throwing them in, we can stop the problem and no babies will drown. By going upstream we can eliminate the cause of the problem.”

B “It’s too risky.”

N And so the numbers of babies in the river increased daily. Those saved increased, but those who drowned increased even more.

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1. What is the story trying to say about society today?
 2. Who might we expect to find when we travel up the river?



Shipleigh MP meets with refugees and asylum-seekers

MR Philip Davies, the Conservative MP for Shipleigh, has strong views about immigration and asylum. He was publicly challenged by the superintendent minister of the Bradford (Great Horton) circuit, the Rev Paul Flowers, to meet with asylum-seekers and refugees who form part of the Great Horton congregation.

Invitation

Mr Davies immediately accepted the invitation and the meeting was held, without anyone from the media being present, at Mr Flowers' home.

Afterwards Mr Flowers said: "Mr Davies, who has often been critical both of Government policy in the area of immigration and asylum, and of so-called 'bogus' asylum-seekers themselves, came and spent two hours on a Sunday afternoon with a wide range of asylum-seekers and refugees. Those whom he met were predominantly from African countries

which have been and still are in internal turmoil.

"He spent a long time listening to sometimes difficult and horrendous stories of persecution, torture and the murder of family members, which had led people to flee from their homelands. He was prepared to admit that most of those present deserved to be granted asylum.

"With us, he was angry that the appeal process is far too lengthy, in the case of many of our congregation taking between four and eight years to determine.

Process

"For our part we pointed up the paucity of legal support during this process. We are glad that he came and we hope that we contributed something to his knowledge of the situation, which he can use in debates in the House of Commons."

Methodist Recorder, 1 March 2007

"Power is present in all human situations, because power is nothing more than the ability, capacity and willingness of a person, a group of people or an institution (whether it is a church or a nation) to act. The ability, capacity or willingness to act is, in itself, neither good nor bad. What makes power constructive or destructive is how it is used and for what purpose it is used."

Robert Linthicum, Transforming Power



Opening worship

Have somebody in the group read out the Bible passage Isaiah 1:13–17.

Creator god of all,
Your prophet Isaiah described a world full of joy.

In places of sorrow,
Places of sadness,
Places of suffering,

Let your prophet be heard

Your prophet Isaiah described a world without weeping.

Where the tears of the lonely,
The tears of the lost,
The tears of those longing for peace
Fall on dry ground,

Let your prophet be heard

Your prophet Isaiah described a world
Where all people had enough to eat and a home to live in.

In the lives of the rich,
In the souls of the wealthy,
In the actions of those who have enough to share,

Let your prophet be heard

Your prophet Isaiah described a world
Where those who lived to a hundred years old
Would still be considered young.

Where injustice kills the young –
Physically,
Emotionally,
Mentally –

Let your prophet be heard.

Ewan Aitken, Iona Community, G2 3DH



Closing worship

Have someone in the group read out Luke 4:14–21.

Liberate all who follow Christ
From narrowness of vision
And limited discipleship.
Make your people keen to serve you.
In the public worlds of business,
Politics, education, law, industry
And wherever the welfare of humanity
May be improved or threatened.
Thus may compassion and justice
Inform our national life and institutions
As keenly as they address our consciences.

Amen

John L Bell © WGRG, Iona Community, G2 3DH

Final blessing

God of our lives,
Bless our endeavours
To serve and to love,
When we ask “Where next?”
Rather than “What cost?”

Jesus, our companion, bless our holy anger
That we may sweep out hypocrisy from our thinking and our deeds.

Spirit of liberation,
Bless our restless journeys
As we ask the difficult questions
And resist the easy answers.

Amen

Yvonne Morland, Iona Community