

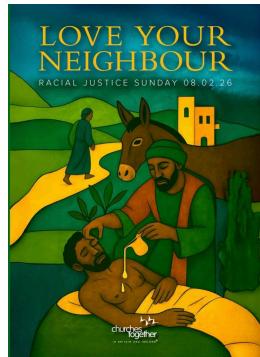
Dorset South & West Circuit. Written Service....You are the salt of the earth.

Racial Justice Sunday. February 8th 2026.

Prepared by Revd Jean Quick.

Call to Worship.

Praise the Lord. Blessed are those who fear the Lord, who find great delight in his commands. Psalm 112:1



STF 455

All my hope on God is founded;
he doth still my trust renew.
Me through change and chance he guideth,
only good and only true.
God unknown,
he alone
calls my heart to be his own.

Human pride and earthly glory,
sword and crown betray our trust;
what with care and toil we fashion,
tower and temple, fall to dust.
But God's power,
hour by hour,
is my temple and my tower.

God's great goodness aye endureth,
deep his wisdom passing thought;
splendour, light, and life attend him,

beauty springeth out of nought.
Evermore
from his store
new-born worlds rise and adore.

Daily doth the almighty giver
bounteous gifts on us bestow;
his desire our soul delighteth,
pleasure leads us where we go.
Love doth stand
apt his hand;
joy doth wait on his command.

Still from earth to God eternal
sacrifice of praise be done,
high above all praises praising
for the gift of Christ his Son.
Christ doth call
one and all:
ye who follow shall not fall.

Prayers of adoration and confession

Heavenly Father, we thank you for Your many blessings. You are gracious, and full of compassion. We praise You for Your righteousness and the knowledge that your love will endure forever. You bring light to the darkness and guide our every steps. With You by our side we will not be shaken, discouraged or defeated. May our hearts be steadfast in our love for You, and our faith, hope and trust in You be kept steadfast. By the power of the Holy Spirit, help us to delight in Your commands. May we walk upright before You in all we do and bring to you our songs of unending love and worship. In Jesus' name, **Amen**.

Lord God, the psalmist speaks of a blessed life for those who fear you and find delight in your commandments. We come to You, acknowledging the gaps in our lives and our desires to follow in your ways. Our occasional delight in sin, our many failures to be gracious and just, and our wavering trust. We ask for Your transformative power to fill us with Your light, guide our steps, secure our hearts, and make us generous people, full of compassion, so we can be channels of Your blessing to others. Help us walk in Your ways, Lord, that our lives might reflect Your enduring goodness, in Jesus' Name, **Amen**

Bible reading: Matthew 5:13-20

'You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. 'You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.'

'Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practises and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.'

Reflection

'You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?'



Jesus speaks these words right after the Beatitudes, describing the character of those who belong to His kingdom. People who are poor in spirit, merciful, pure in heart, and peacemakers. Now He tells them and us, You are the salt of the earth.

Salt seems to be a timeless commodity that never goes out of fashion or becomes replaced or upgraded with a different product. I guess we all have some form of salt in our homes and we use it for so many different purposes. We often ignore it and only feel anything towards it, when it's become unusable. Often damp and refusing to come out of the salt pot. I had one such pot recently and worse than just being damp the salt had started to corrode the metal top and any salt that came out of it brought tiny specks of corrosion that made the health of my food questionable.

This week we are thinking about racial justice. The image I have just described has so many connections with how we have allowed the corruption of racial prejudice's to creep into our lives without even thinking about it. I grew up in a growing multi cultural city. People came from all walks of life and it seemed at that time, ok to mark them out by collective derogatory terms. It was just something that was there and no one gave it a second thought, or did they? I often wonder how my school friends, of so many years ago felt about the names we used. I remember not liking the names people called me. Unfortunately children can be unkind and unthinking and they might pick on anyone they deem to be different. Do remember the childhood rhyme about sticks and stones might break my bones but words....and that's were the rhyme is untrue; because words, unkind words do hurt us and they live in our memories. Thankfully we are now in a society and culture that values inclusivity and seeing people as valued and respected no matter what our backgrounds. However like the unused salt pot we need to continually shake up the contents of our thoughts and actions. Our words and understanding of those who we are privileged to share this world with. Unless our 'salt' and influence becomes worse than useless and corrupts and poisons and we as it's vessels become worse than useless. We become anything but merciful, pure in heart, and peacemakers.

How did Jesus' world think about Salt? In the ancient world, salt was priceless. It wasn't just for making food taste better, though it does that wonderfully. Salt's primary roles were:

Preservation. It stopped meat from rotting in a world without refrigeration. In Jesus' time, refrigeration didn't exist, so salt was essential for preserving meat and fish from decay. Without it, food spoiled quickly in the heat. Imagine a fisherman hauling in a fresh catch. He rubs it generously with salt from the Dead Sea to stop bacteria and rot, allowing it to last for weeks or months. Similarly, Christians are called to "preserve" society from moral and spiritual decay, countering corruption, injustice, racism, prejudice and hopelessness with righteousness and truth. If the salt is never applied (or becomes ineffective), the meat rots. Jesus warns: if we fail to engage the world with our faith, we're like unsalted meat, good for nothing.

Flavour. It brought out the best in food. I recall a child's description of salt. "It's what makes food taste bad if you forget to put it in." I have had so many different salt shakers in my lifetime. Some to match my dinner services, others because they looked lovely catching the light and some because they were just so practical. Picture a beautiful salt shaker on a dining table. It's shiny, full, but never picked up. The food remains bland. One preacher said: "God doesn't want us huddled in the salt shaker (the church building); he wants us shaken out into the world!" Christians must "get out of the shaker", engage in workplaces, schools, and communities, to add flavour and preserve goodness. If we isolate ourselves, we lose our influence, becoming "trampled underfoot" like worthless salt. I for one, sadly can't count the number of times I wish I had spoken up instead of keeping quiet. Especially when someone was being unkind and derogatory about other people. It takes grit and courage to speak out. However when you liken our words to salt. Too much salt can spoil the meal, and in the same way you just need a pinch of the right words to help spread the message. Racism is a corrupting force, festering in prejudice, injustice, and division. Like unsalted meat rotting in the heat, societies unchecked by godly influence descend into deeper hatred and violence. Christians, as salt, preserve by standing against racism: speaking truth, advocating justice, and fostering unity. One source notes that believers "stop the spread of rot, or evil in our culture," including speaking out against racism and working for reconciliation. If we withdraw or compromise, remaining silent in the face of bigotry, we lose our saltiness and fail our purpose.

Purity and healing. It was used to cleanse and season offerings in the temple. I wonder how often we season the offerings of our thoughts and conversations in the church with the kind of 'salt' Jesus is alluding to? Sadly wherever groups of people get together there can be conflict. The church is not immune but we do have the resources to deal with our concerns in pure and healing ways. I was once privileged to be invited to observe how a Society of Friends, a Quaker community met as a church council. They were discussing property and finances much like any other church. People expressed their opinions and ideas and once everyone who wanted to speak had spoken they held a period of silence to discern the way forward. It was quite moving. No heated debates, instead something that felt very prayerful and reflective. We often talk about preserving our peace. How can we best preserve and purify and heal the peace that our world desperately needs? Jesus says His followers are to have this kind of influence on the world: to preserve what is good, to combat moral decay, to add godly flavour to life, and to point people toward purity in Him.

This is all very cosy! When I was a child if I had a mouth ulcer my father would put raw salt on it to cure it. Ouch! Jesus in our scripture moved us from the cosiness to a Shocking Warning: 'if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and

trampled underfoot.' Ouch! So how does salt lose its Saltiness? Pure salt (sodium chloride) doesn't lose its flavour—it's chemically stable. But in Jesus' day, much of the salt came from the Dead Sea or mineral deposits. It was often impure, mixed with gypsum or other earthy substances. When exposed to moisture or rain, the actual sodium chloride could leach out, leaving behind a tasteless, worthless residue that looked like salt but it wasn't. This residual substance was thrown onto paths or roads and trampled underfoot. I guess the nearest we get to this is the salt that grits our icy roads. You would not think about using it for anything other than to be trodden upon. Jesus uses this vivid image to issue a grave warning: It's possible for those who claim to follow Him to lose their effectiveness. How does this happen?

1. Compromise with the world, When believers mix godly living with sin, worldly values, or moral impurity, their distinctiveness fades. We start looking just like everyone else.
2. Conformity instead of transformation Romans 12:2 warns, "Do not conform to the pattern of this world." When we blend in, chasing the same pleasures, priorities, and approvals; we lose our preserving power.
3. Hypocrisy. Professing faith without living it out makes our witness repulsive rather than attractive.
4. Neglecting our connection to Christ. Apart from Him, we can do nothing (John 15:5). When we drift from prayer, Scripture, and obedience, our "saltiness" diminishes.

The result? We become "good for nothing", ineffective for the kingdom. The world tramples over a tasteless church or believer without noticing any difference.

So how do we retain or regain our Saltiness? The good news is that true disciples can stay salty if we stay connected to Jesus. He is the source of our flavour and power. If we try to live distinctly. Pursue holiness, speak the truth graciously (Colossians 4:6: "Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt"), and show love that stands out. If we engage in the world without being absorbed by it. Salt works by contact. We need to get out there! Serve, speak, preserve goodness, and point to Christ. Eating salty foods drives you to drink water. Christians should live in such a way, through joy, kindness, and integrity so that others become "thirsty" for the living water Jesus offers, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (John 4:13-14). Our lives point to him, making people desire the gospel.

If you feel like you have lost your edge, repent and return to Him. His grace restores us and makes us useful in His kingdom. We need to be the salt that preserves, flavours and heals our world. Our world is decaying rapidly, morally, spiritually, culturally. It desperately needs salt. You and I are that salt. Don't hide it in the shaker. Don't let it get spoiled. 'You are the light of the world. Your influence matters no matter how small and remember a pinch of salt is all that 'it' needs. After Jesus' resurrection, only about 120 followers gathered (Acts 1), yet they "salted" the entire Roman Empire with the gospel. Today, one faithful Christian in a workplace or family can create thirst for God, preserve integrity, and influence many. Don't underestimate your impact.

Jesus' words in Matthew, challenges followers to actively influence the world for good. In a society marred by racism, a form of moral and spiritual decay, Christians are called to be salt: preserving justice, adding the flavour of God's love, and countering corruption.

Racism divides, dehumanises, and spreads like rot, contradicting the truth that all are made in God's image (Genesis 1:27) and united in Christ where "there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female" (Galatians 3:28). As salt, believers must engage to halt this decay and promote reconciliation. Let us be the light of the love of Christ for all people.

STF 59

Lord, the light of your love is shining,
in the midst of the darkness, shining:
Jesus, Light of the world, shine upon us;
set us free by the truth you now bring us -
shine on me, shine on me.

*Shine, Jesus, shine,
fill this land with the Father's glory;
blaze, Spirit, blaze,
set our hearts on fire.
Flow, river, flow,
flood the nations with grace and mercy;
send forth your word,
Lord, and let there be light!*

Lord, I come to your awesome presence,
from the shadows into your radiance;
by your blood I may enter your brightness:
search me, try me, consume all my darkness -
shine on me, shine on me.

As we gaze on your kingly brightness
so our faces display your likeness,
ever changing from glory to glory:
mirrored here, may our lives tell your story -
shine on me, shine on me.

Prayers for Racial Justice and Equality provided by the Church and Society Commission of the Church of Ireland, written by DENZIL IEUAN JOHN.

Lord of every nation and the God of all, hear our prayer for the refugees who enter the UK seeking a secure home. It troubles us, Lord, that there are so many who leave their homeland, in desperation and fear for their

own safety, looking for security for themselves and their families, risking their lives and paying heavily to unscrupulous gangs, finding their hopes shattered and then finding themselves living in fear.

It concerns us, Lord, that there are those within Britain and Ireland who show racist traits dressed in political ideology, folk who are inspired by pro-nationalist thinking, without a heart for those who are desperate for normality, those who are reaching out for a community of care and receiving rejection at each juncture. Father God, may they know that your love them, and may all political opponents understand that these men and women need to feel the love of Your church in their lives.

Father God, help us to meditate on Your inclusive love and Your far-reaching grace in today's world. Father God, forgive us if we assume that people can ring-fence Your grace according to where people were born, and not engage the needy wherever they are currently.

Father God, bind us together with peoples of all nations, whatever their race, colour or creed. May we accept our common humanity as we see the whole of humankind as Your immediate family. In the name of Jesus.

Amen. We say the Lord's Prayer.

STF 504

May the mind of Christ my Saviour
live in me from day to day,
by his love and power controlling
all I do or say.

May the word of God dwell richly
in my heart from hour to hour,
so that all may see I triumph
only through his power.

May the peace of God my Father
rule my life in everything,

that I may be calm to comfort
sick and sorrowing.

May the love of Jesus fill me,
as the waters fill the sea;
him exalting, self forgetting -
this is victory.

May I run the race before me,
strong and brave to face the foe,
looking only unto Jesus
as I onward go.

An Act of Commitment to Racial Justice

Dear people of God, we stand in the shadow of the prophets crying out for justice and peace. God calls us to be a people of reconciliation, serving a world in need. Courageous women and men have taken the risk of standing up and speaking out for the least and the lowest. This work involves risking ourselves for the sake of God's love and moving beyond ourselves in order to seek and serve Christ and one another. We are all called to the work and ministry of racial justice and reconciliation.

Will you persevere in prayer and fellowship? Will you proclaim the good news of reconciliation in both word and deed? Will you acknowledge and address the prejudices that keep you from loving all God's children? Will you strive to see Christ in all persons, and value those with whom you disagree?

Will you seek to mend what is broken by human sin and greed? Will you strive to speak words that liberate and heal and break the bonds of silence? Will you seek the perfect love which casts out all fear? Will you work toward dismantling the sin of abuse of power?

With the help of God, I will.

May almighty God empower you to continue his work of reconciliation, give you the courage to overcome fears and embody love, give you grace to grow in self-awareness and personal integrity, and strengthen you to seek the unity that is in Christ, that we may rejoice with all God's children as disciples of God's Son.

The Blessing

The blessing of God the Father, who made from one every nation that occupies the earth; of God the Son, who bought us for God from every tribe and language and people and nation; and of God the Spirit, who brings us together in unity, be with us and remain with us always. **Amen.**

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