

As Ambassadors for the children and young people in the Methodist Church in Ireland, we would like to follow on from the statement made last week by the Council on Social Responsibility. We feel called to continue highlighting and responding to the ongoing events around the world as a response to the killings of George Floyd and many others from the black community. Racism is a massive globe spanning issue, and whilst the media have been portraying that it is mainly an American issue, we know that this is not the case. Therefore, as Ambassadors and Christians, we feel called as a matter of urgency to follow in the Methodist tradition of standing up against racism established even before the abolition of slavery. Racism in any form is not okay.

Today we celebrate the beautiful diversity of our church families, especially here in Ireland. We are incredibly fortunate in our church to be able to walk through the door of any youth and children's event or church service and see an array of people from many different backgrounds and cultures. Yet, as always, we can be striving to do more. We are commanded to be open, loving and respectful of one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. As His stewards, we are called to raise awareness and place value in God's creation through our prayers and conversations as well as being aware of how we act and speak to all people. We are all loved by our Heavenly Father unconditionally and all worthy of salvation through the sacrifice of Christ and therefore, we should always treat each other as equals.

However, we recognise that racism and discrimination are still real issues which affect the everyday lives of some people living in our very own communities and churches. We often say in the Methodist Church that we are a family, and as a family we must stand together! For several years a key focus of the Methodist Church in Ireland has been to encourage people to get their feet wet, this means to step out, be loving towards our communities and to always be learning. Furthermore, we need to be engaging with the world through the church and to boldly work for Christ in all we do. We believe that this transfers to every aspect of our lives as Christians.

For those of you who are wounded and scarred because of how these issues have affected you, we stand beside you and are praying with and for you. This cannot just be a one-off statement; this must be an ongoing and personal process too. We all have a part to play, both individually and as a church family. The Bible tells us in Micah 6:8 to "act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God," and in Proverbs 31:8-9 we are called to "Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy." As followers of Jesus we have a responsibility to come alongside those who are facing or who have faced adversity and to stand with them, support them and speak up for them when they cannot be heard.

As young people of the Methodist Church in Ireland, we urge you to make a stand now within our families, friend-groups and outer circles and say, "enough is enough." Whether you are a student, employed or unemployed or are retired, we all have a part to play in bringing justice and seeing God's kingdom brought to His earth. As Christians we are called to be more Christ like every day: to strive to love our God with all our soul, heart and mind and to love our neighbour as ourselves (Matthew 22:36-40). We too are called to stand strong regardless of the circumstances and amount of media coverage on this issue and other injustices, to see the day where all racism and discrimination are things of the past and Christ returns in perfect justice. All injustices are seen by our compassionate and loving Heavenly Father.

God created everyone in His divine image, He reaches out to everyone, and loves everyone even to the point of His son's death on a cross. There then cannot be room for hatred, the demeaning of others, racism, or discrimination of any kind in His name. Instead, our call is to love others as God has loved us. And how has God loved us? By becoming one of us and suffering and dying for us. "If God SO loved us, how ought we to love one another?!" - J Wesley

Ambassadors: Danielle Chambers, Rhys Earl, David Griffith, Bevin Jennings, Joshua McRoberts, Tara Redmond, Rebekka Snoek, Aaron Sweeney.