



SESSION 3

**JUSTICE
FOR ALL**

SESSION GOALS

BY THE END OF THIS SESSION, PARTICIPANTS WILL

- understand the concept of justice
- connect personally to what marginalization and injustice feel like
- recognize that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people and their families are often marginalized in churches
- have identified a new step to take to work for justice for LGBT people and their families

SESSION 3 OVERVIEW

Each component lists the appropriate time the activity takes and is ranked to help you select the activities that best fit your group.

Opening Activity

Choose one or more from:

- Opening Prayer (3 min)
- Opening Scripture (3 min)
- Song (7 min)

Core Lesson Components

Choose one or more from:

- Reflections on the Previous Session (7 min)
- Video and Discussion (15 min)
- Bible Exploration (15 min)
- What Is Justice? (20 min)
- Mercy or Justice? (15 min)
- United Methodists and Justice (20 min)
- Marginalization Sharing (15 min)
- Identity Simulation (12 min)
- Connections to Injustice (15 min)

Call to Action

- Call to Action (12 min)

Closing Activity

- Blessing and Sending Forth (5 min)

Key to Component Ranking

CAUTIOUS

A comfortable, safe activity suitable for all, even the most cautious and timid

READY FOR MORE

An activity that requires more critical thinking and sharing: suitable for groups that are ready to take more risks and expand their views

ADVENTUROUS

An activity suitable for groups that are eager to tackle tough subjects, are open to new ideas, and are willing to challenge the status quo

OPENING PRAYER (3 min)

MATERIALS NEEDED: United Methodist Hymnal (UMH).

INSTRUCTIONS: Ask a volunteer to read aloud the prayer on page 456 of the UMH: “For Courage to Do Justice.”

OPENING SCRIPTURE (3 min)

MATERIALS NEEDED: a Bible.

INSTRUCTIONS: Ask a volunteer to read aloud Micah 6:8.

SONG (7 min)

MATERIALS NEEDED: copies of the UMH, The Faith We Sing (TFWS), other songbooks or song sheets, and piano or song leader.

INSTRUCTIONS: Sing a song from the UMH, TFWS, or other songbook that reflects justice, such as

UMH 121 There’s a Wideness in God’s Mercy (especially verses 1, 3, and 4)
UMH 356 When We Are Living
UMH 432 Jesu, Jesu
UMH 444 O Young and Fearless Prophet (verses 1 and 4)
UMH 583 You Are the Seed (especially verse 2)
TFWS 2153 I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me
TFWS 2172 We Are Called
TFWS 2174 What Does the Lord Require of You
TFWS 2186 Song of Hope
TFWS 2208 Guide My Feet
TFWS 2222 The Servant Song

REFLECTIONS ON THE PREVIOUS SESSION (7 min)

MATERIALS NEEDED: the list of action items from the end of the previous session.

INSTRUCTIONS: Check briefly with participants about actions, thoughts, and reflections since the last session.

Discussion/Reflection Questions

1. During our last session, we focused on being called to love and thought of ways that LGBT people regularly fall outside the circle of love in our church. What

additional thoughts or reflections on this topic have come to mind during the past week?

2. At the end of our last session, we made commitments to take specific actions in our congregation that would include LGBT people and their families and demonstrate God's love. What loving actions did we take this week?
3. We also made individual commitments to specific actions that would include LGBT people and their families and demonstrate God's love.

Would some of you like to share what happened with the loving actions you took on this week?

- VIDEO AND DISCUSSION** (15 min): "Our Call to Justice," Dr. Traci C. West, Professor, Drew Theological School

MATERIALS NEEDED: a computer ready to play the video file accompanying this curriculum.

INSTRUCTIONS: Watch the video together, then follow up with a discussion. You may view the video by visiting <http://vimeo.com/rethinkinclusion> and selecting the file labeled "Justice for All".

INTRODUCTION: Dr. West is professor of ethics and African American studies at Drew University Theological School in Madison, NJ. She's an ordained elder in the New York Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, and she has served in campus and parish ministries. She received her master's of divinity degree from Pacific School of Religion and her doctorate from Union Theological Seminary. She's the author of several books and articles on violence against women, racism, clergy ethics, sexuality, and other justice issues in church and society.

Discussion/Reflection Questions

1. What are your first reactions to Dr. West's statements?
2. When she talked about "breaking open all the hypocrisy that exists in our church," what was she referring to?
3. She says that justice is more than talk, that it must also be action. What actions in the church and in society did she challenge us to take on?
4. Why is it important to address justice issues now, with some sense of urgency?

- BIBLE EXPLORATION** (15 min)

MATERIALS NEEDED: a Bible for each participant.

INSTRUCTIONS: Have each participant, or small group of participants, read one of the following passages. Follow with the discussion/reflection questions.

Micah 6:8 (Do justice, love kindness, walk humbly with God)

Psalm 33:5 (God loves righteousness and justice)

Psalm 106:3 (Happy are those who observe justice)

Matthew 12:18 (“I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles”)

Amos 5:24 (Righteousness flows like a stream)

Luke 4:18 (The Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives)

Matthew 7:12 (Do to others as you would have them do to you)

Discussion/Reflection Questions

1. What do these passages say about God and justice? About Jesus and justice?
2. Who are the people who need justice?
3. As Christians, what role do we play in acts of justice?

▣ WHAT IS JUSTICE? (20 min)

MATERIALS NEEDED: definitions of justice; Mercy and Justice Handout, Naming Acts of Mercy and Justice Handout.

INSTRUCTIONS: Read together the definitions of justice and mercy. Look together at the Mercy and Justice Handout to understand the distinction between acts of mercy and acts of justice. The harm caused to LGBT people and their families needs to be addressed with both mercy and justice. Let’s look at specific lists of acts of mercy and acts of justice related to LGBT people and see whether we can add to these lists. (Pass out the Naming Acts of Mercy and Justice Handout.) Invite small groups to name the mercy or justice counterpart to the items on the list. After 5 minutes, invite these small groups to share their results with the larger group.

INTRODUCTION: Micah 6:8 talks about “doing justice” and “loving mercy” (or “kindness” in some translations). But what *is* justice? And what’s the difference between justice and mercy? Examine together the following definitions and information.

What Is Justice?

According to Dictionary.com, justice is the quality of being just; righteousness, equitableness, or moral rightness. Justice is also the moral principle determining just conduct and conformity to this principle, as manifested in conduct, dealing, or treatment.

In modern society, justice is most often described as fairness according to the law....But God’s justice goes beyond simply obeying the law; it is mainly concerned with doing what is right in all relationships....It means living in relationships of love and caring. Justice begins with God and flows from God’s overwhelming love. God wants justice for all of creation and wants us to be living examples of God’s justice....When Jesus announced the purpose for his work on earth, he said it was to bring good news to the poor, prisoners, those with physical limitations, and anyone who suffers. Justice brings protection and freedom to all. When people’s deepest and most basic needs are taken care of, they are set free from the painful effects of their need.

(Excerpted from <http://www.americanbible.org/brcpages/Justice>; accessed September 27, 2009)

What’s the difference between an act of justice and an act of mercy?

Christian compassion includes both acts of mercy and acts of justice.

Acts of mercy are those that involve caring for the immediate physical or spiritual needs of those hurt by injustice or calamity.

Acts of justice are those that work to change a harmfully oppressive political, economic, or cultural system.

When a church is involved in both mercy and justice efforts, it brings both immediate healing and long term systemic change. Only doing acts of mercy is “maintenance ministry” that does not deal with the root causes of injustice. Only doing acts of justice can result in being disconnected from the real lives of people and their hopes and needs. Many of the biblical prophets called for balancing mercy and justice actions, resulting in restoration, healing, and community for God’s people. (Adapted from Kathleen and James McGinnis, *Parenting for Peace and Justice*. St. Louis, MO: Institute for Peace and Justice; 1984, as quoted in *Follow Christ with Two Feet of Christian Compassion*. Chicago, IL: Reconciling Ministries Network; n.d.)

Note: See the Mercy and Justice Handout for help in clarifying the distinction between works of mercy and works of justice.

■ MERCY OR JUSTICE? (15 min) (Alternate use for the Naming Acts of Mercy and Justice Handout)

MATERIALS NEEDED: one copy of the Naming Acts of Mercy and Justice Handout for the leader, one sign that says “Justice”, and one sign that says “Mercy”.

INSTRUCTIONS: *Use this exercise after defining and discriminating between justice and mercy in the previous activity. Don’t use this activity if you’ve previously used the Naming Acts of Justice and Mercy Handout.* On one end of the room, tape a sign that says “Justice” on the wall; on the other end, tape a sign that says “Mercy”. Ask the class to stand up and vote with their feet. You read an action and each person must decide whether it’s an act of mercy or an act of justice, then walk over and stand by the corresponding sign. If participants have differing opinions, briefly discuss why they think the activity is either mercy or justice. (Some items could belong to either category depending on the way they’re interpreted.)

UNITED METHODISTS AND JUSTICE (20 min)

MATERIALS NEEDED: copies of the United Methodists and Justice Handout.

INSTRUCTIONS: Divide the group into smaller groups of three or four participants. Historically, United Methodists have been concerned with justice. The handout contains excerpts from *The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church 2008*, and *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2008*; these excerpts talk about our historic involvement with justice and provide some specific statements about the social community and equal rights. Using this as background information, develop 2- or 3-minute skits. Have all the members of each small group act as either neighbors or church members in the skit.

SCENARIO: You're having a conversation with your neighbor. The neighbor doesn't attend your church but mentions hearing that your church is involved in something to do with gay or transgender people. The neighbor thinks that church is for worshipping God and doesn't see why your church is getting into this. What do you say?

Have each small group present its skit to the entire group.

United Methodists and Justice

The United Methodist Church believes God's love for the world is an active and engaged love, a love seeking justice and liberty. We cannot just be observers. So we care enough about people's lives to risk interpreting God's love, to take a stand, to call each of us into a response, no matter how controversial or complex. The church helps us think and act out of a faith perspective, not just respond to all the other "mind-makers-up" that exist in our society.... Taking an active stance in society is nothing new for followers of John Wesley. He set the example for us to combine personal and social piety. Ever since predecessor churches to United Methodism flourished in the United States, we have been known as a denomination involved with people's lives, with political and social struggles, having local to international mission implications. Such involvement is an expression of the personal change we experience in our baptism and conversion. (*The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church 2008*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press; 2009)

¶162.III. The Social Community

The rights and privileges a society bestows upon or withholds from those who comprise it indicate the relative esteem in which that society holds particular persons and groups of persons. We affirm all persons as equally valuable in the sight of God. We therefore work toward societies in which each person's value is recognized, maintained, and strengthened. We support the basic rights of all persons to equal access to housing, education, communication, employment, medical care, legal redress for grievances, and physical protection. We deplore acts of hate or violence against groups or persons based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, or economic status. Our respect for the inherent dignity of all

persons leads us to call for the recognition, protection, and implementation of the principles of The Universal Declaration of Human Rights so that communities and individuals may claim and enjoy their universal, indivisible, and inalienable rights. (*The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2008*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press; 2009)

¶162J Equal Rights Regardless of Sexual Orientation

Certain basic human rights and civil liberties are due all persons. We are committed to supporting those rights and liberties for all persons, regardless of sexual orientation. We see a clear issue of simple justice in protecting the rightful claims where people have shared material resources, pensions, guardian relationships, mutual powers of attorney, and other such lawful claims typically attendant to contractual relationships that involve shared contributions, responsibilities, and liabilities, and equal protection before the law. Moreover, we support efforts to stop violence and other forms of coercion against all persons, regardless of sexual orientation. (*The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2008*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press: 2009)

▣ MARGINALIZATION SHARING (15 min)

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the introduction and invite participants to share stories.

INTRODUCTION: The biblical call for justice for God's people is often aimed at people who are marginalized. What is marginalization?

Marginalization is the social process of being relegated or confined to a lower social standing or outer limit or edge. Marginalization involves people being denied degrees of power. It can result in material deprivation and exclusion from services, programs, and policies. (Adapted from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marginalization>. Accessed September 27, 2009)

Discussion/Reflection Questions

1. Have you ever had a situation in your life when you felt marginalized? (Invite several participants to share stories of situations where they felt that way.)
2. How are LGBT people and their families marginalized in our society? What services, programs, and policies in the United Methodist Church exclude LGBT people? What about policies in our congregation?

▣ IDENTITY SIMULATION (12 min)

MATERIALS NEEDED: 8 to 10 small pieces of paper per participant (2 x 2 or 3 x 5 Post-it notes, 3 x 5 cards, or 8½ x 11 sheets of recycled paper that have one side blank and are cut into fourths), pencil or pen for each participant.

INSTRUCTIONS: Lead participants through the following steps and discussion:

1. Think of the elements that make up your identity (things such as family, religion, occupation, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, athletic or artistic abilities, and so on).
2. On each small piece of paper, write one or those elements. You should have at least five.
3. Next put these elements in order according to their importance to you as a person. Put the most important one on the top and the least important one on the bottom.
4. Concentrate for a moment on the top two items.
5. Now imagine that the United Methodist Church has just passed a new resolution saying that you can't express those two elements of your identity in the church.

Discussion/Reflection Questions

1. How do you feel?
2. What are some possible actions you could take in response to those feelings?
3. What does this have to do with justice?
4. How does this simulation relate to the experiences of LGBT people in the United Methodist Church?

CONNECTIONS TO INJUSTICE (15 min)

MATERIALS NEEDED: copies of the United Methodist of Color for a Fully Inclusive Church (UMOC) quote for participants.

INSTRUCTIONS: Read together the description of the UMOC and the excerpts and discuss them.

UMOC is a multiracial and multiethnic movement in the United Methodist Church that calls on the denomination to embrace the multicultural realities of our society and our world, saying, “If the church is to be a vibrant instrument of God's love, faithful to the justice of Jesus, then it must be a place that welcomes all.”

We remember all too well those voices who said racism was not present in the church. We remember those voices who wielded scripture as a support for division and inequality. We remember the voices who pled patience to inequality by claiming that justice was gradual. We remember the time when silence in the presence of racism was the church's greatest sin....

We all know Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender people. Seen or unseen, they are vital members of our communities. For many of us, they have been our invisible neighbors, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, cherished members in the community of life. Indeed, we recognize that throughout history,

our church and our communities have benefited from the gifts of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender people. But in return for their gifts, we have given these brothers and sisters silence or scorn. When they have asked for their name and acknowledgment of their place as worthy members in the family of God, they have been answered with continued overt or subtle forms of spiritual and physical violence.

We cannot and will not deny that we recognize in the experiences of our Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender brothers and sisters the resonance of our own journeys as people of color in the church. We see the truth in the words of Coretta Scott King when she says that the struggles for inclusion of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender people are part of the "*continuing justice movement*" for which Martin Luther King, Jr. gave his life, a movement that "*thrives on unity and inclusion, not division and exclusion.*"
(United Methodists of Color for a Fully Inclusive Church brochure)

Discussion/Reflection Questions

1. What role does silence play in oppression?
2. How have our communities benefited from the gifts of LGBT people?
3. In what ways have we returned silence or scorn for these gifts?
4. In what ways has the church answered with forms of spiritual and physical violence?
5. In what ways are the struggles for inclusion by LGBT people different from those endured by people of color? In what ways are the struggles by LGBT people part of the "continuing justice movement"?
6. Where do you see division and exclusion used in the church around issues related to LGBT people? Where do you see unity and inclusion being used?

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly.

(Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., *Letter from Birmingham City Jail*. 1963.

<http://historicaltextarchive.com/sections.php?op=viewarticle&artid=40>. Accessed September 29, 2009)

■ CALL TO ACTION (12 min)

INSTRUCTIONS: Look back over the sharing exercise where we identified specific services, programs, and policies that marginalize LGBT people and their families in society, in the United Methodist Church, and in our congregation. Also look at the Mercy and Justice Handout for ideas of actions that could be taken.

1. What specific acts of justice or mercy for LGBT people could we commit to work toward as a congregation? As individuals?
2. Write them down and be ready to report on progress at our next session.

□ BLESSING AND SENDING FORTH (5 min)

MATERIALS NEEDED: a small candle such as a birthday candle, tea light, or Christmas Eve candle for each participant; matches or a lighter.

INSTRUCTIONS: Give each participant a small candle. Light one candle and darken the room, if possible. After a few moments of silence, have participants, one by one, light their candle from the candle held by the person next to them. As candles are being lit, say:

Sometimes we walk around in the dark and obstacles seem insurmountable. The tasks loom large—like the tasks of working for justice for **all** of God's people. Then we see the light of Christ...the example of Jesus working to empower the people He ministered to every day. Things don't seem quite so dark and impossible any more. Just one candle can make a difference. Just one **person** can make a difference. Just one person can work for justice. But when more candles are lit and the lights join together, it seems brighter and we're less alone. Our world changes as we light more and more candles. This is what happens when we all do our part to shine light into our corner of the world. Whatever God is calling you to do, God's power will be there through faith to help you change the world. Whatever God is calling us to do, God's power will be there through faith to help us work together to change the world. Go forth to work together for justice for all.



Notes



**MERCY AND JUSTICE
HANDOUT 1**

MERCY.....SOCIAL SERVICE	JUSTICE.....SOCIAL CHANGE
<p>Scriptural reference: The Good Samaritan story</p> <p>The story doesn't attempt to survey the causes of highway banditry. The Samaritan provides temporary and immediate relief.</p>	<p>Scriptural reference: The Exodus story</p> <p>Moses doesn't ask for food and medicine for the Jewish slave-labor force. He challenges the institutional system. His message: "Let My People Go."</p>
Consists of private, individual acts	Consists of public, collective actions
Responds to immediate need	Responds to long-term needs
Provides direct service: food, clothing, shelter	Promotes social change in institutions
Requires repeated actions	Resolves structural injustice
Directed at the effects or symptoms of injustice	Directed at the root causes of injustice
EXAMPLES	
<p>Social service addressing physical needs Helping with homeless shelters, food pantries, clothing drives, emergency services Giving money to homeless sexual minority youth who have been rejected by their families Calling 911 or rushing a "bashed" LGBT person to the hospital for medical attention</p> <p>Social service addressing spiritual needs Praying with lesbians with breast cancer or for persons with HIV/AIDS Taking communion to a hospice Listening nonjudgmentally to people's stories of pain and rejection Reading with LGBT people scripture accounts of God's love for all and Christ's inclusion of those who were marginalized</p>	<p>Advocacy Passing laws Changing corporate policies or practices Engaging in congregation-based community organizing</p> <p>Social education Placing stories in local news media and church newsletters Teaching church school classes Organizing essay contests, workshops, seminars, or literature table displays</p> <p>Social witness Signing a petition or making a speech for justice Participating in a prayer vigil, fast, or public demonstration</p> <p>Social action Engaging in an activity aimed at changing part of society's behavior or organization Taking action designed to influence decision making</p>

(Adapted from Kathleen and James McGinnis. Parenting for Peace and Justice. St. Louis, MO: Institute for Peace and Justice (www.ipj-ppj.org), as quoted in Follow Christ with Two Feet of Christian Compassion. Chicago, IL: Reconciling Ministries Network;n.d.)

**NAMING ACTS OF MERCY AND JUSTICE
HANDOUT 2**

NAME THE COUNTERPART FOR EACH ITEM

	ACTS OF MERCY	ACTS OF JUSTICE
1		Help pass a hate crimes bill that includes protection for LGBT people
2	Offer personal support to a parent with an LGBT child	
3		Raise money for LGBT advocacy groups
4	Engage an LGBT person in reciprocal family sharing	
5		Create an “off the street” program for LGBT youth
6	Join a care team for someone with HIV/AIDS	
7		Speak up publicly when humor that is demeaning to LGBT people is used
8	Throw an anniversary party for LGBT neighbors	
9		Use positive LGBT examples when you teach or preach
10	Reach out to those harmed by unjust doctrine	
11		Create an inclusive table display for the Annual Conference
12	Talk to your pastor about your commitment to a fully inclusive church	
13		Change company policy where you work to include family leave for LGBT people
14	Send a note of appreciation to LGBT clergy	
15		Attend “Believe Out Loud” training in your area

(Adapted from Kathleen and James McGinnis. *Parenting for Peace and Justice*. St. Louis, MO: Institute for Peace and Justice, as quoted in *Follow Christ with Two Feet of Christian Compassion*. Chicago, IL: Reconciling Ministries Network;n.d.)

UNITED METHODISTS AND JUSTICE HANDOUT 3

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