



GREENBELT 2018 COMMUNION WINDRUSH & CARNIVAL



We've been thinking about this year's communion service for a few years now. We wanted to continue the thread of the last two years' focus on inclusion – of children in 2016 and of those with additional access needs last year. In particular, we have wanted to have a service focused around black experience and black identity at the festival (a festival we recognise is very white).

So, after much thinking, this is what we are going to attempt this this year – a year of key anniversaries which focus our hearts and minds on the experience of people of colour, both here in Britain and the world over: 70 years since the arrival of the Empire **Windrush** at Tilbury Docks carrying the first wave of Caribbean immigrants to the UK in 1948; 50 years since **Martin Luther King's assassination** in 1968; 50 years since **Enoch Powell's "Rivers of Blood"** speech in 1968; 40 years since **Rock Against Racism** was founded and hosted its first gig here in the UK in 1976; and 25 years since the murder of black teenager **Stephen Lawrence** in 1993.

At the beginning of the New Year, and after much reflection, we chose to build this year's service especially around the Windrush story – not least because we had been delighted to work on ideas for the service and early drafts of the liturgy with **Michael Jagessar**, Head of Intercultural Ministries at the United Reformed Church, and of Caribbean descent.

Here's the vision for the service ...

WINDRUSH

On 22nd June 1948 HMT Empire Windrush docked at Tilbury in East London and its 493 passengers disembarked. Hundreds of Caribbean men and women had crossed the Atlantic. Some were coming to join the British armed forces; others wanted to establish new lives in "the mother country"; one was a stowaway!

The world was recovering from the Second World War. In the UK, work was plentiful but housing wasn't. The "Windrush generation" found themselves excluded from much of the social and economic life of Britain. Many experienced horrific racial violence and injustice. They exposed depths of prejudice in British culture including – and perhaps especially – in British churches.

CARNIVAL

Part of their response was to regroup around aspects of Caribbean culture including music, worship and community organising. One aspect of that culture was carnival. Since the mid-60s the Notting Hill Carnival has brought colour and joy to the grey streets of West London. It is one of the largest street festivals in the world. And, while it clashes with Greenbelt almost every year in terms of dates, carnival has a lot of resonance with us in other ways.

In Medieval times, carnival both parodied the oppressive structures of the day and dramatically portrayed an alternative reality. In many ways the Notting Hill Carnival picked up this dynamic. Carnival is colour and music, but it is also subversion – an enacted rebellion – shouting in the face of authority, saying loud and clear that there is a place where the sun shines and laughter and justice reign. Without denying the reality of pain, injustice and oppression, carnival paints a picture of another possibility. In Marijke Hoek's book *Carnival Kingdom* she describes how the first Christians sought to live out a new social order and envisaged a renewed world – but they did it in the middle of the constraining, oppressive forces of the day. We are them.

April 2018 also marks 50 years since the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. MLK's work was oriented toward the creation of a community characterised by love and justice, a vision of society he called "the Beloved Community."

COLOUR

What better place to dream than around our 'common table' where a meal is insurgency, subversion, and hope at work? And what better way to do it than by a dancing, singing, laughing celebration of colour?

This year Greenbelt's Festival Communion has been 'crafted' especially for us, largely by people of colour.* We will share worship from an intercultural perspective, largely mindful of BAME minority voices and traditions while at the same time expansive enough to reflect solidarity with all those who are forced to dwell on the edges in our liturgical life. We will draw on songs and words from the Caribbean, Nigeria and from the spirituals of the African-American tradition. We will be led by sisters and brothers of faith and colour from all over the world. Like the first disciples of Jesus, huddled in an upper room, looking out at a hostile and hardening culture, we will feel the Wind-rush of God's multi-coloured Spirit as we imagine and enact another world. We will celebrate carnival. ●

**Please come wearing bright colours, and bring something (or someone) that will make lots of noise.*

Our thanks for wisdom and counsel in helping us craft this service over many months (if not years) now go to: **Michael Jagessar**, Head of Intercultural Ministries at the United Reformed Church, **Anthony Reddie**, Extraordinary Professor of Theological Ethics at the University of South Africa, **Chine McDonald**, Greenbelt Trustee and Head of Christian Influence & Engagement at World Vision. The service will include contributions from **Evie Vernon** as well as our already-booked friend from the States **Winnie Varghese**. Plus many more! **Andrew Graystone** has once again worked with us to produce the actual service as an event. Our thanks go to him. Our music will be led on the day – and after in a hot gospel set – by last year's hit sensations **Soul Sanctuary Gospel Choir**.

TRUST GREENBELT

This year we are giving 50% of the money we collect at the communion service away in five different directions. This reflects our four campaigning concerns – climate change, migration, UK poverty and Israel/Palestine – plus the theme of this year's service, racial justice.

RACIAL JUSTICE YOUNG IDENTITY

Young Identity is a spoken word collective formed in Manchester in 2006 by Shirley May and Ali Gadema. Young Identity delivers dynamic poetry and spoken word workshops in arts venues and community centres across the city, working with eager writers aged 13-25 from different racial and religious backgrounds – most of whom are young people of colour.

MIGRATION NACCOM

The No Accommodation Network

NACCOM is committed to bringing an end to destitution amongst asylum seekers, refugees and migrants with no recourse to public funds living in the UK. It exists to promote best practice in and support the establishment of accommodation projects that reduce destitution amongst asylum seekers. You can meet them and learn more about their work in the Greenbelt TakeAway this weekend.

CLIMATE CHANGE MISSION LIFEFORCE

Since 2009, Polly Higgins has familiarised the world with the term "ecocide", inspiring a worldwide awareness of the potential of a law of ecocide. Mission LifeForce came into existence in 2017 to enable the next stage of putting that law in place by financing those states who can take it forward, while simultaneously creating the opportunity for:

- conscientious protectors standing up for frontline communities to be heard in a court of law;
- judiciary to recognise ecocide as a missing crime.

ISRAEL / PALESTINE PMX / HOLYLAND TRUST

Building on our growing connections with the Palestine Music Expo (PMX) and our longstanding connections with Holyland Trust and their festival, Bet Lahem Live, we will give towards a collaborative initiative they are working on to produce a groundbreaking event in Bethlehem in 2020, the year that will see the little town take on the mantle of the Arabic City of Culture.

UK POVERTY POVERTY TRUTH COMMISSION

The Poverty Truth Commission model brings together key decision-makers with those living at the sharp end of poverty. These groups work together towards overcoming poverty in their region; ensuring that those affected by decisions are central to decision-making. The Commission believes poverty will only be truly addressed when those who experience it first-hand are at the heart of the process.