

## **CELEBRATING RACIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY**

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This coming Sunday has been designated as 'Racial Justice Sunday'. On this day the churches in Britain are asked 'to reflect on racial justice issues, to pray for a Christian response, and to make a commitment to work for justice'. In the hope of inspiration I therefore dutifully wrote off for a Racial Justice pack available from Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. I confess that I was not particularly impressed with what I received. The Biblical content was minimal, and the worship material was less than inspirational. So I was thrown back on my own resources.

I decided to send an e-mail out to a few friends asking for help to put on a some special music for the Sunday evening service: "Would there be any possibility of getting Asian dancers, Black Gospel Choir, West Indian steel band, and African drums? Or if not all, then some? I wondered whether, with your connections, it would be possible to invite groups who would only need their expenses. There surely must be ethnic churches in East London who might be able to help? Having said that, people contributing don't necessarily have to be Christian - indeed, having non-Christians could be a plus, because there would then be an opportunity for the unconverted to hear the Gospel!"

In the end we have Revelation, a wonderful Black Gospel choir, composed entirely of young people from all across the East End, which got to the finals of the Channel 4 Gospel competition, and has sung with the Harlem Gospel choir and the London Community Choir. We shall turn our evening service into a concert format – although it will include a brief Gospel message. After the service, there will be drinks and nibbles for everybody. I have written a personal letter to all our Black African members and friends and asked them to make a special effort to bring friends and so make something special of this event. Our media team has worked hard to make this event known in the community. Hopefully there will be a great turn out. Thankfully we are not having to pay mega bucks which a professional group might require – but as it will cost us £350 to pay the expenses of the choir and give them a small thank-you gift.

I sometimes wonder whether those preparing material for Racial Justice Sunday are too earnest. Yes, of course, we need to be concerned for injustice, yes of course we need to pray for the disadvantaged, yes of course we need to be reminded from the Scriptures that we are all one in Christ Jesus. However, surely what above all we need to do is to celebrate the rich racial diversity we are able to enjoy in Britain.

What we do next year I don't know. Maybe we will invite some of our West African friends to lay on an African 'feast' for us – from past experience I know that is always a popular event. Alternatively perhaps we should explore a totally different culture: I wonder, are there Christian Asian belly dancers?

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