

## 70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Windrush Generation - 'a cloud of witnesses' suggested resources for worship during the Month of June and beyond

*The SS Empire Windrush arrived at Tilbury docks on 22 June 1948 carrying passengers from the Caribbean, among others. They were invited by Britain to assist with post-war reconstruction.*

*2018 will mark the 70th Anniversary and is an opportunity to celebrate the pioneering Windrush generation that came to Britain. They have contributed to the shaping of British social, cultural and political life. It has not been an easy journey. To celebrate the legacies of the Windrush Generation means to celebrate plurality and diversity of life and in life, as together we seek the common good for all.*

*This small collection of resources is to help Churches (the Christian communities) to celebrate and mark this significant milestone. It would be helpful to also recognise that the Windrush Generation and their progeny will not all belong to the Christian tradition.*

### **calling out**

One: we ought to know...

many: that God is a God of all in the heavens and on the earth

One: we need to know...

many: God brings oppressors to their knees

One: we know....

many: that we are counted among the stars and that we matter?

One: we do know...

many: that we are not alone: so we come to be renewed, we come in hope.

One: you are welcome here... [repeat 4 times turning to the various cardinal directions...]

### **chanting down oneness**

many: we are many, we are one, born here and born there

one: let each gift we embody/bring, be named, shared, and honour  
(pause for naming, sharing, honouring)

many: come meet and greet the Divine in each other

one: let's be many, let's be one

All: gathered here, coming from there and scattered elsewhere: we are many, we are one. Let us celebrate. Let us worship

### **words for the journey**

Here some scripture readings that may be used for reflections, meditations, sermons and caring conversations.

Psalm 103; Isaiah 40:21–31; Matthew 25: 31-45; Mark 4:35-41; John 10:1-10; Acts 2:1-21;  
2 Corinthians 6:1-13; Ephesians 3:14–21; Hebrews 11:29—12:2;

*a psalm of lament*

God of the starry skies,  
warm sands and rolling sea;  
God who beheld us before we were born,  
who wrote our names onto Your palms,  
who whispered hope into our dreams;

You sent us over the ocean  
to a land we called Mother,  
suitcases stuffed with memories of home  
and clothes too thin to keep us warm.  
You sent us to a land that needed  
the strength in our backs  
the dash in our step,  
the skill of our hands  
and the courage of our hearts,

but it was a land that did not want us.

Even before our feet touched cold land  
we knew: blank stares, crossed arms, turned  
heads.  
Rooms suddenly unavailable; wages reduced.  
Fists clenched; punches thrown.  
Harsh words followed us around.  
A chill wind swept us towards  
what safety we could find:  
the smiles, and arms, of folks from back home.

Why, O Lord, why?  
Why did You plant hope in our hearts  
and dare in our dreaming?  
Why did You send us to this  
hard-hearted, pale land  
where our children, grandchildren,  
and great-grandchildren  
would be stopped, frisked and jailed?  
Where our faces would fade into the shadows,  
our ears assaulted with bile,  
our eyes cry themselves out?  
Where every step forward  
would come with great cost,  
and our only escape from the uphill way  
was when we played the music of our youth  
or crowded into small rooms to eat and laugh  
or lay down to sleep at night  
to dream of sun-warmed skin.  
Why?

And why, Lord, did the  
people who claimed You as their own  
not see us as their brothers and sisters?

How long, O Lord, how long  
before justice will tumble down like water  
and  
righteousness like an ever-flowing stream?  
How long until our dark faces  
will be more present in universities  
than they are in prison,  
until our children will be safe on the streets  
and our elderly accorded the dignity they  
deserve?  
How long before our history will be  
treasured,  
our contributions valued  
How long before we belong?

It was you who knitted us together  
in our beautiful, black mothers' wombs.  
Now knit us together in this pale land  
with all the folks who dared to cross oceans  
and all the folks who can't remember  
when their people first came to this island.

This is Your land, God, Yours alone.  
Make it so.

You rescued the baby Moses, rescue us.  
You delivered the Israelites, deliver us.  
You raised the dead, raise us up.

Then our song of praise,  
which we have never stopped singing,  
will flow sweetly over this land.  
Your name will cling to our lips,  
and, together, with all Your people  
we will build a city  
worthy of Your glory.

[Carla A. Grosch-Miller, May 2018]

## **caring conversations**

### 2 Corinthians 6: 1-13

Invite people to share their experiences of endurance and how, over the years, injustice has caused much trouble, hardship and distress.

- Allow time to reflect on how people might have been beaten, imprisoned or experienced riots and why?
- What does it take/involve to overcome the challenges of past (and present experiences)?
- How hard have people had to work to overcome the challenges of the past with sleepless nights and little food? Where do people find strength to cope?

The Windrush Generation can tell stories of patience and generous perseverance in the midst of prejudices and racism. Yet, for many, their faith remains strong and thriving.

Consider inviting someone of that experience (or their progeny) to share some of that story. This is an opportunity for testimony from someone or the telling of a story.

This, though, needs to be approached with care and with a genuine commitment to listen to such sharing.

### Mark 4: 35-41

Imagine the boat was the Windrush and the generations who have been living through a storm ever since they left family and friends behind for a distant shore.....

- What is it like to be battered by wave after wave of racism and injustice?
- How have they coped with the winds which have stirred up trouble and persecution?
- What do they find when they reach shore and get out of the boat?

[Richard Becher, 2018]

## **ritual making as we remember**

one: *(dipping in water, sprinkling in the direction of the gathered community, and saying)*

In Christian tradition, the waters of baptism remind us of our connection to all things: we come from water, and live in communion with plant, animal, earth, water, air and with each other

many:

**Water is life - purifying, quenching, cleaning, and bringing about renewal and transformation. Through baptism, water washes away all that divides us, that we might know our common humanity in a Divine lover. In prayer and solidarity, we are one with all of creation...we belong to each other.**

## **prayers...**

God-in-Community, we thank you for love that touches our deepest needs and for calling us on a walk of memory and hope. We remember all those who through have stood up against injustices and for those on the margins... We remember especially

hands that have touched life

hands that have felt and held pain

hands that have embraced with tenderness and love  
hands that have nurtured creativity against all odds  
hands that have grown limp in despair  
hands that have planted, cleaned, washed, mopped, scrubbed  
hands that have become wrinkled and knotty from carrying much  
hands that have become scarred from doing justice  
hands that hold the promise of past, present and future....

God-of-just-love, bring forth song and celebration, so that the Spirit will be alive among us and we will never tire of the struggle. And in our remembering, help us love even those who despise and hate us so we can break the cycle of evil and transform lives and world. In the name of the one who embodies your way of fullness of life!

[Michael N. Jagessar 2018]

Lover-of-justice-and-peace, shape our consciences and hearts according to your way of just, peaceful and loving lives. Move us beyond fear to speak with compassionate courage and to act with both conviction and humility. Give us ears, eyes, hearts and voices to discern, respond and embody hope through our actions, in private and in public. Bless us with wholeness, and through your Spirit continue to sustain us in the face of powerful forces bent on denying life. Amen

[Michael N. Jagessar, 2018]

God-who-walks-with-us-in-our-pain, accompanying us in the midst of those bent on destroying life: lead us to act justly and fairly - helping all people to see the best in each other. In difficult times, give us courage and hope. In hostile moments between and among neighbours lead us to see the best in each other. Surround us with the spirit and example of that great cloud of witnesses that we walk after, as you gift us with peace-making and reconciling habits of Christ. Remove from our lives all that contradict the way of your love as you grow our horizons and broaden our minds. Breathe your Spirit into all, so that the way of kindness, love, justice and reconciliation will shape our life together. Amen

[Michael N. Jagessar, 2018]

#### people's prayer

Let us pray, conscious that our prayer gives the Spirit a way of breaking into word and song unique in all the universe.

**so, for the words and songs within each of us, we give thanks.**

Let us pray: believing we are bearers of a treasure, the Spirit of Life blessing us with a variety of gifts.

**so, for the treasures we each bear, we give thanks.**

Let us pray: mindful of God in Christ at work in our lives and of what may be possible

**so, we let go, allowing the Spirit to work freely in each of us.**

Let us pray: inviting the Spirit of life, love, and goodness to move freely in our words and in our actions

**become in our lives, the way to what we need, to what we can become, and what we can do. In the name of Christ! Amen.**

[Michael N. Jagessar 2018]

*poetics of windrush*

a boat on troubled waters... [Mark 4: 35-41 & 2 Corinthians 6: 1-13]

When troubled waters overwhelm us  
You, Lord, hear us above crashing waves  
helping us toward the distant shore....  
We need not be afraid  
you will still the wind and waves.  
But the storm still rages Lord, so please,  
lead us to the calm of a distant shore...

Thank you for stepping into our boat  
travelling with us to a distant shore.  
We're drowning, though,  
under the waves of injustice.  
Please arise to our struggles  
in the troubled waters  
and show us we are not alone.

It's been a long time, Lord,  
since we left everyone behind  
sailing for this distant shore.  
Come now, calm the troubled waters  
for we have endured so much  
and fear the storm will overwhelm us...

Forgive us for disturbing you.  
You seem oblivious to the storm  
and the wind and wave batter us  
Forgive us our doubts and fear  
we have endured so much  
and the waves are not letting up...

Compassionate One, rise up with us to our storms  
calm the troubled waters around us  
for we desire to reach the distant shore  
where we can walk in peace ....

[Richard Becher, 2018]

## Who do they say I am?

I say I am Karen  
And I want to be free  
To define who I am  
And simply be me...  
To look in life's closet  
And check out the shelf;  
Be clothed in the labels  
I choose for myself.

Daughter, sister,  
Mother, all three –  
I'm nothing  
Without my family,  
Who've shaped from the start,  
Whether known or unknown,  
The me that I am  
Who is me alone.

But step through the door  
And out of the fold...  
I encounter a world  
Of labels untold,  
Which sees not the person  
I think to be me,  
Ascribing instead  
What they want me to be.

I say I am Karen,  
And in yesteryear  
Thought my name was the only  
Label to wear,  
Till they labelled me 'coloured'  
And made me believe  
'My sort' was not good,  
Making heart and soul grieve;  
And tho I could try  
I was not good enough-  
So I learned I am Black,  
Made of sterner stuff!  
Learned to think, learned to speak  
Learned to know my own mind –  
To choose my own labels:  
But did I leave self behind?

I say I am Karen.  
They ask 'Karen from where?'  
And I know, for I've learned,  
I'm not Karen from here;  
So I sift through the labels

Within and without  
Seeking one which will speak  
Of the me I'm about:  
I know I'm not English –  
That's one I won't own,  
Tho this country is all  
I have ever known;  
Black British!  
Caribbean!  
They're labels I bear  
To place for someone  
A girl from nowhere.

I say I am Karen,  
And I have one child;  
But seeing no husband  
They think me defiled.  
They label me fallen;  
They think I was shamed,  
And await my account  
For the sin they have named.  
Sometimes I can see  
The confused, concerned eye  
As they pointlessly wait

I say I am Karen,  
And I have one child;  
But seeing no husband  
They think me defiled.  
They label me fallen;  
They think I was shamed,  
And await my account  
For the sin they have named.  
Sometimes I can see  
The confused, concerned eye  
As they pointlessly wait  
For a contrite reply...  
Then, yearning a picture  
More tidy somehow,  
Declare 'that was your past,  
But you're much different now!'

So with head held high  
And back drawn straight  
I claim the label  
They want me to hate:  
I AM a single mother  
A truth I lay bare –  
Call me 'problem',  
Call me 'issue'  
Call me 'sinner' –  
Just dare!  
I don't say I am sorry

Won't hang my head low,  
Won't side-step, nor fret  
About what who might know –  
For I am who I am  
And long-since came to see  
I'm alright with God,  
And God's alright with me.

I say I am Karen  
But the me I embrace  
Is so much a product  
Of labels I face;  
Makes me see and peel back  
At least some that I use  
And walk, just a while,  
In another's shoes.

I say I am Karen.  
I am me alone –  
A complex concoction  
Of labels I own;  
Of those I've rejected  
Or skewed to my way,  
And still others I'm sifting  
To see what they say.  
Yet in wearing, not wearing,  
Those labels, I see  
Sometimes I lose sight of me.

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## wind-Rush

[A Pentecost Reflection Acts 2:1-21]

It was a carnival-like atmosphere  
celebration was in the air  
just the day for diversity  
people with strange foreign names  
from cities far off swarmed in.  
Luke' geography of the known world  
may have been limited,  
yet a mosaic of cultures was evident.

The lonely little group,  
friends of Jesus  
never imagined it will happen:  
the dance of their lives - a conspiracy,  
a breathing together (*conspire*)  
turning their lives inside out  
firing up their lives.

The wind-rush God re-directs  
Babel's trajectory of oneness  
in hurricane force wind  
of flaming tongues  
God's "YES" to multiplicity is loud.  
The wind-rush One  
is not in the business of oneness.

Dangerously restless,  
is the Wind-rush One  
disrupting our 'neat categories',  
releasing us to 'catch afire'  
with new life and new spirits.

Breathe on us,  
O Wind-Rush Spirit,  
turn us into  
an ecstatic house of living stones.      © Jagessar May 2015

## **being blessed, becoming blessings**

May our portion be joyful as the sky  
May our portion be deep as the sea  
May our portion be melodious as music  
May our portion be strong as the mountain  
May our portion be enduring as love songs  
May our portion bring lasting peace  
Now and always.

In the name of the Creator, the Spirit in all wind that blows, and the one born in the water  
of the womb, washed in death, and risen in the river of life....

[Michael N. Jagessar 2018]

## ***singing out our souls***

### **For Caribbean folk who left**

*tune: Dominus regit me ('The King of Love...')*

For Caribbean folk who left  
to start new lives in Britain,  
for all they faced and risked and found,  
give thanks for their devotion.

For those who kept their faith in Christ  
despite surrounding coldness,  
who prayed and sang and witnessed here,  
give thanks for Christ-like boldness.

For babies born and fam'lies made,  
and churches filled with singing,  
for children who received the faith,  
let thankfulness keep ringing.

For years of faithful service giv'n,  
in church and in the nation,  
a gift to Britain in Christ's Name,  
let's offer our ovation.

For those retirees, here or there,  
whose faith is ever-living,  
let's ask for active, grace-filled years  
to crown their lives of giving.

And for our faithful, loving friends,  
who served, but left for glory,  
may we give thanks and honour them,  
remembering their story.

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### **Hymns-Songs from the Caribbean to Consider**

- Let us talents and tongues employ (Fred Kaan and Doreen Potter)
- Enter into Jerusalem (Words and Music Richard Ho Lung)
- I am the way (Word and Music Richard Ho Lung)
- Fashion me a People (Words and music Carol Gordon)
- Halle, halle, hallelujah

## **resource - watch**

We are currently in the process of doing the final editing of a short film of Richard Becher's script "Longing to Belong" which has been adapted for screen and has been filmed. This important resource will be accompanied by additional conversation starters to encourage 'caring conversations' on the film. A link will be provided as soon as the film is ready.

## **Web-links on Windrush**

### **Churches Together in Britain and Ireland**

<https://ctbi.org.uk/category/witnessing-together/racial-justice/>

### **70<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Windrush Page**

<http://www.windrush70.com/>

### **Celebrating Windrush – Black Music**

<https://www.keepthefaitth.co.uk/2018/02/23/celebrating-windrush-70-years-on-church-music-part-1-by-juliet-fletcher/>

### **Baptist Together – on Windrush Generation**

[https://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/405720/The\\_Windrush\\_Legacy.aspx](https://www.baptist.org.uk/Articles/405720/The_Windrush_Legacy.aspx)

### **Windrush – Church of England**

<https://womenandthechurch.org/features/riding-tide-windrush-church-england-article-february-2018/>

### **Service – Celebrating Windrush (CTE)**

<https://nclf.eu/a-national-service-celebrating-the-spirit-of-windrush-70th-anniversary/>

### **Novels-Books on Windrush Generation Experiences**

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2018/apr/25/colin-grant-books-windrush-generation>

<http://forreadingaddicts.co.uk/polls-and-discussion/8-books-that-capture-caribbean-voices-and-the-spirit-of-the-windrush-generation/25335>

**A Collective effort** [Richard Becher, John Campbell, Carla Grosch-Miller, Michael Jagessar]

Global and Intercultural Ministries

United Reformed Church

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