

## Walking with Micah. . . as activists

### What hymns can tell us

One consequence of Walking with Micah may be to shine a light on what being an activist looks like. Is it lying on a busy road to protest a climate issue; or clambering on to the top of a train to prevent it running? Is it sharing an online campaign to condemn a government policy; or writing a letter petitioning for the release of a prisoner? Is it healing on the Sabbath or cleansing the temple ([John 2: 13-22](#))?

In some form or other, we may feel that being an activist includes working for what is right, challenging false assumptions, and “walking in the light” (as Martin Leckebusch puts it: [Show me how to stand for justice](#), StF 713). It involves speaking out – and sometimes, Douglas Galbraith reminds us, more than speaking:

The God who shouts  
in fury when the powerful shame the poor  
will break the chains, and those who hide in fear  
he will restore. ([StF 714](#))

One prominent example of Christian activism was the Civil Rights movement in America led by the Revd Martin Luther King – see Pamela Pettitt’s hymn, [“I have a dream”, a man once said](#) (StF+). Martin Luther King’s story is picked up in the all-age materials produced by the Walking with Micah team.

John M. Smith’s take on the parable of the good Samaritan ([“Who is my neighbour?” asked the scribe](#), StF+) carries the refrain: “Where those in need have pain to bear / the love of Jesus leads us there.” Following Jesus’ original story, Smith describes an individual who takes both practical actions (to care for an injured man in a dangerous place) and selfless love.

### Walking in the light

Likewise, John the Baptist puts his neck on the line (literally) in order to speak out for God’s commonwealth of justice and joy – effectively imaged by Jan Berry in [Praise to the God who clears the way](#) (StF 183). In doing so, John testifies to the light, itself a resonant metaphor for what activism may look like: light in the darkness. It is also a reminder of Christ’s injunction to let our own light shine. As Clare Stainsby puts it in her Advent candle-lighting hymn, [Light a candle in a darkened place](#) (StF 174):

Light a candle in a darkened place,  
in its flame see hope on ever face,  
Christ our Saviour will be born,  
heralding a brand new dawn,  
so let it burn.

## Activism as leadership

Fred Kaan broadens the scope of activism by turning his attention to those in authority ([We turn to you, O God of every nation](#), StF 720). He speaks of those who “rise on earth for right relations” and prays specifically for wisdom for “the leaders of the nations, / the gift of carefulness to those in power”.

He might be speaking of a prime minister or president, but we may also think of a community leader or a local councillor; of a Marcus Rashford or a Greta Thunberg as of a Nelson Mandela.

Kaan’s voice echoes those captured in the book of Proverbs. Proverbs jumps rapidly between topics (one commentator has dubbed its content as like “King Solomon’s Twitter account”). Yet to take a single chapter at random – chapter 29 – and to read it through a justice lens is to discover a wealth of apt observations, many of them aimed at those in a position to influence: “The righteous know the rights of the poor; the wicked have no such understanding. . . The poor and the oppressor have this in common: the Lord gives light to the eyes of both. If a king judges the poor with equity, his throne will be established for ever.” ([Proverbs 29: 7, 13-14](#)) As Fred Kaan writes:

Teach us, good Lord, to serve the need of others;  
help us to give and not to count the cost.  
Unite us all to live as sisters, brothers;  
defeat our Babel with your Pentecost!