

A Dalit Solidarity Prayer station

- A prayer station can be a simple and effective way of focussing thoughts and prayers around the issues of casteism and discrimination.
- The following ideas are only starters and can be adapted as appropriate, according to what is required and what is available.



Fabrics can be draped over the available space/tables. Indian bedspreads could be used, sari fabric adds a beautiful touch.

Dalit candles are sold by a number of UK based agencies who work with Dalit people. They are in small clay pots, such as those made and used by Dalit people. Try the [Life Association website](#) If candles will be a hazard, the same pots, once the candle is burned, can be used with a battery-operated tea light inside.

Spices add fragrance, texture and interest. Use small bowls of coloured spices such as turmeric, chilli powder, cardamom pods, star anise... Life Association also produce Dalit spice sets in small jars, which look very attractive.

The Dalit Madonna belongs to the Methodist Church Collection of Contemporary Christian Art.

Prayer pointers and other information can be presented on cards, preferably laminated. The sheets which follow may be appropriate or other material from the MWiB Dalit Solidarity Resources Pack or from various websites, including the Methodist Women in Britain website (www.mwib.org.uk) could be used.

He stretched out his hand and touched him...

“When Jesus had come down from the mountain, great crowds followed him; and there was a leper who came to him and knelt before him, saying, ‘Lord, if you choose, you can make me clean.’ He stretched out his hand and touched him, saying, ‘I do choose. Be made clean!’ Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. Then Jesus said to him, ‘See that you say nothing to anyone; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them.’”

Matthew 8:1-4

Jesus never shrank from touching a person who was considered unclean.

How can we “touch” Dalit people today?



Officially, “untouchability” has been abolished in India

But there is a widespread lack of political will to enforce these laws.

On average...

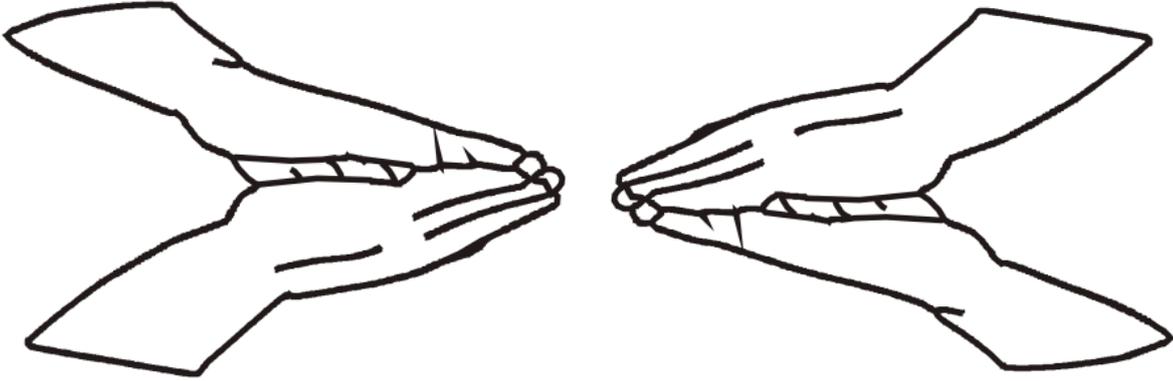
- ...every 18 minutes there is a crime committed against a Dalit
- ...every day, three Dalit women are raped, two Dalit people are murdered and 11 are assaulted

Dalit women have been described as victims of three-fold discrimination, because of their poverty, class and gender. They are often landless, lacking opportunities for education, health care, access to legal rights and food security.

Although Casteism is integral to Hinduism, it also infiltrates the Christian church in India.

Incidences of caste discrimination also take place within the UK.

Sharing peace



If there is someone else here at this prayer station with you,

share the peace

in a simple way,

devised by a Christian musician and theologian from Singapore:

- In pairs, face one another, but without making eye contact
- Place your palms together (like praying hands) and hold out your hands to the other person who places her/his hands in the same way; touching fingertips with you
- Now place your hands gently on the outside of her/his hands, and stroke them from the wrist to the fingertips, afterwards putting your hands back together so she/he can do the same to you.
- Although you do not make eye contact at all, you may like to whisper “peace” to one another.

Meditate and Pray

A Dalit meditation on John 4; from material prepared by the Student Christian Movement, India, for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity January 2013. Available on www.ctbi.org.uk

Alone with his thoughts he sat by the well
he looked wearied by the heat and dust
of our desert land
I approached quietly
not wanting to disturb this man Jew
I was so used to being despised
I despised myself
a Samaritan woman – a nobody
who had grown not to care for herself
or for what others thought ...
grown comfortable just ...
looking down...
Freedom came to me by degrees
with each word carried
on that day's gentle breeze
and when he finally said,
"I who speak to you am He ..."
I knew it was the truth.
It was the Messiah who had asked me for water ...
God's daughter returned
to her crushed people that day with a message
come and see
walk with me, head held high
towards freedom

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Loving God of all our imaginings and strivings, we pray that we may be willing for you to dispel the complacencies in our lives, the comfort zones with which we are so familiar and that you would move us ever forward to sharpen our perspectives and inform our minds, so that we may truly understand the situation of the Dalit people.

Enlighten the minds of all those in positions of power and influence, so that they may work with a careful conscience and a reverent respect to bring about changes and chances for those for whom choice is a rare luxury.

Show us all the way forward to encourage, to empower and above all to continue without losing heart the prayers for Dalit families and communities.

In the name of Jesus Christ, who so often placed Himself alongside the poor and undervalued.

Amen

Joy Chapman