



The Diocese of Southwark Anti-Racism Charter

Strategies for enhancing ethnic diversity and inclusion

"There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:28

2020 is a year that will not be forgotten for generations to come. The worldwide COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic wreaked havoc upon the health and economic well-being of people, communities and countries large and small, developed and less developed, in ways that will be felt for years to come. It also highlighted the structural inequalities that exist between and within countries, as poorer, more marginalised communities have been disproportionately affected by the impact of the virus¹.

At the same time, the spectre of racism and racial injustice was horrifically displayed on TV screens throughout the world in late May 2020, as viewers watched the callous killing of African-American George Floyd, over a period of 8.46 minutes, at the knee of a white Minnesota policeman. The officer's cruelty and the lack of action from those around him clearly demonstrated the racism that still pervades our world. Centuries after the historic trafficking of humans from Africa, their enslavement and the development of eugenics and racial stratification according to skin colour, we still see this mechanism for discrimination and inequality in our world.

Being anti-racist is not the same as simply not being racist. It is not enough as a Diocese not to be racist; instead we must actively counter, disrupt and oppose racial injustice. This isn't an easy task; it takes introspection as well as continued intentional action and is not a static description of ourselves. Despite our Christian injunction to believe and behave as if we are all one in Christ, the deep inequalities that exist between and within groups of people of different colours, cultures and ethnicities persists, and persists within churches also². As Ibram X Kendi writes:

"One either allows racial inequities to persevere, as a racist, or confronts racial inequities, as an antiracist. There is no in-between safe space of 'not racist'. The claim of 'not racist' neutrality is a mask for racism."³

Black Lives and Black Voices Matter

George Floyd's death escalated the Black Lives Matter⁴ (BLM) protests of the USA into a worldwide movement demanding racial justice now. This also catalysed individual and societal institutions in the UK, government, civil society and the wider Church to intensify the long overdue work to bring about racial justice⁵ and reconciliation. Any tolerance of inequality on grounds of race devalues God's creation, and churches undertook once again to confront the sinful reality of persistent and pernicious racism in their structures. There is much to repent of and still much work to do.

As a Diocese, Southwark is very aware of the way in which the concerns of Black Lives Matter touch every aspect of church life, our leadership and governance and our buildings and their history. We believe that the local parish and National Church Institutions should play a leading role in changing our structures to ensure they value and represent people of all ethnicities and backgrounds. In the Diocese we have been trying to make changes to our structures and processes for the past 20 years. After the publication of the 2000 report on institutional racism in the structures of the Diocese of Southwark, we committed ourselves to implementing the report's findings and working to address racism and injustice⁶. We have done so through education and training, and through our Diocesan management oversight structures such as the Diocesan Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns Committee (DMEACC) and the local action focus of the Episcopal Area Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns Committees (MEACCs).

This work continues but there must be renewed urgency to our actions amid rising concern about insufficient progress towards racial justice, equality and inclusion in our organisation. It is time to embed this work strategically into our governance structures for the Diocese and the parishes and also in our liturgy, our preaching and teaching, our prayers and our everyday actions as we live out God's love in the world. This will of course include working in partnership with the Southwark Diocesan Board of Education (SDBE) and our schools, acknowledging their long-standing equality policies which emphasise recognising and respecting difference and celebrating diversity.

We recommit ourselves to this transforming work to become a truly anti-racist organisation. We intend to do this by embedding the three key principles of this Anti-Racism Charter⁷ (ARC) in our Diocesan strategic response to issues of racism, racial inequality and racial injustice and indifference.

Southwark ARC: key principles

An explicit theological understanding that God's kingdom is multi-ethnic, and that it is through our baptismal covenant that we recognise and respect the dignity of every human being and our unity in Christ.

An intentional focus in our theological studies, liturgy, teaching, prayer, word and work to take strategic and practical actions to combat racism and racial inequality.⁸

A clear strategy for increasing and sustaining diversity in our governance structures at Diocesan and parish level, so as to ensure representation and participation of people from diverse ethnic backgrounds at all levels of our organisation.

Southwark Vision and ARC commitments

Our Diocesan vision, based on the Five Marks of Mission⁹, is rooted not only in proclaiming and teaching God's love and justice but also in seeking to transform unjust structures in the Church and in the world. The Diocese is committed to challenging racism in our church and the wider society, recognises the need to create a more diverse Church, and is fully committed to:

- learning more about the way in which past and present Church collusion in institutional racism and ethno-cultural differentiation continues to impact on United Kingdom Minority Ethnic (UKME – we no longer use the BAME acronym¹⁰) community members' participation in church. This will include relevant work on the history and contributions of diverse people to our Church as well as the history of our buildings and memorials

- creating safe and trusting spaces to have honest and open conversations about race and racism, racial inequality, power and privilege, and actively listen to the voices of those impacted and affected by the issues, from UKME and white communities
- providing training and mentoring and opportunities for leadership development for people from diverse heritages
- working to close any gaps that exist between UKME and white experiences of engagement with the Diocese
- engaging our parishes and equipping them to engage constructively with the Charter and the practical change it hopes to bring about
- collaborating with our training institutions and schools on issues of diversity and inclusion.

This focus on anti-racism and concomitant strategies for enhancing ethnic diversity and inclusion fit within our Diocesan Vision of ensuring the fruitful future of a Church for all which reflects our diverse community in membership and leadership as we seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind, and pursue peace and reconciliation¹¹. We need to put our own house in order before we can work alongside others in civil society and government institutions to make the necessary changes in our society. We acknowledge that whatever is done must have real outcomes with positive and intentional action to redress inequities.

ARC: Action Plan for leadership development

Our Diocesan commitment ranges from working to embed greater participation in governance structures as well as lay and ordained posts, to improved learning and education. The Action Plan for Leadership Development links the three key Diocesan ARC principles to a 12-point programme that will allow us to listen to the different voices of UKME people from global majority heritages, to build up capacity through targeted training and development, to strengthen leadership skills and experience and to increase vocations and appointments in pipeline and senior roles, and to encourage and support our parishes and their leadership teams to engage with issues of racial justice¹².

This plan is clearly only the first stage of a programme of action. Each bullet point will have its own detailed action plan and process for engagement, implementation and progress, which can be monitored, reviewed and evaluated to demonstrate progress. Every department in the Diocese will be included and will be expected to embed and enable this work in their own departmental programmes¹³.

Cover image: the Southwark Trinity Icon.

The Diocesan Turning up the Volume action plan includes:

- Bishop's Staff Meeting intentionality and accountability for increasing UKME vocations and expanding the numbers of UKME post holders recruited, overseen by a senior lead on diversity and inclusion on the Bishop's Staff team
- revised recruitment, discernment and selection processes for lay/ordained posts including training on issues of race equality and unconscious bias
- increasing the number of UKME post-holders recruited, both lay and ordained, and offering support for the progression of UKME clergy in pipeline leadership roles
- providing mentoring for leadership for lay/ordained UKME clergy, lay ministers and lay leaders (including support and mediation if relevant) and safe spaces for discussion along with networking opportunities
- increasing diversity in representative participation on Synodical and Diocesan and parochial governance structures, particularly encouraging younger UKME emerging leaders
- increased participation of UKME advisers in the vocational discernment team and support for those taking part in the process
- unconscious bias and racial awareness training at all levels of Diocesan institutions, including deaneries and parishes, together with other training courses that look at theology, power, privilege, prejudice, and intercultural competence and intersectionality
- embedding the work of the Area MEACCs within the Area Diocesan structures, offering practical support for parishes to enable them to engage with the ARC and the Diocesan action plan in their parochial and congregational context. This will include liturgical resources and educational materials on racial equality that promote the ongoing aspects of relationship building, repentance, reconciliation and healing
- promoting, celebrating and marking Black History Month and Racial Justice Sunday at every level of church life, providing liturgical support, celebrating the contributions and achievements of local UKME members, and partnering with other institutions and organisations to deliver events that focus on racial justice
- robust data collection and effective monitoring of race, ethnicity and diversity data
- benchmarking and monitoring Diocesan actions against national strategies and indices of race equity and equality and providing an annual report.

ARC: historic monuments and plaques

In Britain, the BLM protests instigated a national conversation on Black British history and the nature and effect of the country's historic slave trading past on contemporary racialised attitudes and systemic racism. The removal of Edward Colston's statue in Bristol has prompted consideration of the removal of other statues, monuments and other memorabilia linked to the slave trading past in public places in the UK, including in some historic churches¹⁴.

Monuments and plaques are physical historic symbols commemorating and/or celebrating past events and the people who were engaged in those events, and may be appreciated or valued for the associations and meaning linked to them. The Diocese recognises that there will be a number of churches in the Diocese with historical links to the slave trade. There are serious arguments put forward for either the retention or removal of contentious monuments and plaques in sacred spaces. However, we are not encouraging churches to simply remove such memorials, but to engage in research and reflection and find ways to tell the history of the building and the memorial through a re/discovery of the past¹⁵. This is not about either revising history or being blind to the implications of the past.

Rather it is about encountering history with gospel eyes.

The Diocese will work through the Archdeacons and the Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) and National Church guidance to provide relevant advice on issues that may arise regarding retention, relocation or removal.

Conclusion

Racism is an affront to God. It is a sin, born out of the denial that all human beings were created equal in God's image and that all are one in Christ. Racism, racial injustice and racialised exploitation, through structures such as historic or modern-day slavery, have no place in society or church institutions. Acknowledgement of the anti-slavery campaigns of Wilberforce, Clarkson and Equiano does not obviate the fact that, for hundreds of years, racialised theology and biblical interpretation were used to justify Church collusion with the enslavement and racial denigration of people of African heritage. Racialised attitudes of white Christian superiority also undergirded the post-slavery movement of Asians from the Indian subcontinent to Africa and the Caribbean through indentured servitude in the 19th century.

References

¹ In the UK, people from minority ethnic communities have proportionally higher death and infection rates, in part due to their socio-economic and health status. They are more likely to have underlying health conditions, or work in key worker or front-line roles, or live in intergenerational houses, and thus be more exposed to the virus: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/articles/whyhaveblackandsouthasianpeoplebeenhithardestbycovid19/2020-12-14>

² In 2006 the General Synod of the Church of England issued an apology, acknowledging the part the Church itself played, through the actions of individuals and agencies, in perpetuating and profiting from historic slavery and the exploitation of and discrimination against people based on the colour of their skin. The General Synod voted in February 2020 to apologise for racism experienced by United Kingdom Minority Ethnic (UKME) people in the Church of England since the arrival of the Windrush Generation. Speaking to General Synod, the Archbishop of Canterbury, The Most Revd Justin Welby, said there was “no doubt” that the Church of England was still “deeply institutionally racist”. The National Church has established an Anti-Racism Taskforce, and in 2021 will set up an Archbishops’ Commission on Racial Equality. The Commission will address the justified anger surrounding the continuation of structures of racism and racial injustice within Church Institutions.

³ Ibram X Kendi, *How to Be an Antiracist*, Penguin Random House, 2019.

⁴ Black Lives Matter is a movement that began as a groundswell community action to protest the killing of African American teenager Trayvon Martin and the acquittal of George Zimmerman of his murder in 2013. The movement began with the use of the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter on social media. As defined by Wikipedia, Black Lives Matter (BLM) is “a decentralized political and social movement protesting against incidents of police brutality and all racially motivated violence against black people”. While there are specific organisations such as the Black Lives Matter Global Network that label themselves simply as “Black Lives Matter”, the Black Lives Matter movement comprises a broad array of people and organisations. The slogan “Black Lives Matter” itself remains untrademarked by any group. The broader movement and its related organisations typically advocate against police violence towards black people as well as for various other policy changes considered to be related to black liberation.

⁵ Race/racism is inextricably linked to the use and abuse of power and privilege of one group of people over another, often those visibly different. Sadly, in the 21st century racism and racial injustice continues to cause incalculable harm to people and societies all across the world. Systemic/institutionalised racism and racialised inequalities remain inherent in many societal institutions and negatively impact on minority ethnic communities as they relate to those institutions – including education, housing, the criminal legal system, health institutions, schools and sadly also in the Church. Racial justice programmes strive to create a world where all are treated equally, irrespective of their colour, culture or ethnicity, and systems of racism are dismantled, resulting in equitable opportunities and outcomes for all.

⁶ <https://southwark.anglican.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/inquiry.pdf>

⁷ The charter must not simply be a plan of action but should be covenantal in its nature.

⁸ This is not simply about individual clergy formation but also our corporate formation in being intrinsically grounded in this explicit theological understanding and informed by diverse voices and experiences.

⁹ <https://www.anglicancommunion.org/mission/marks-of-mission.aspx>

¹⁰ We mark here a shift away from the acronym BAME to UKME, which is more inclusive of colleagues who did not see themselves as falling within a Black or Asian categorisation. This includes our community members from Korea, China, Hong Kong and Singapore, and Latin America, among others. This term (unlike BAME) has come into usage as it recognises that people coming from global majority ethnic heritages and living in the United Kingdom are only minority ethnic in that context. The term “People of the global majority” acknowledges that Black, indigenous, and people of colour represent more than 80% of the world’s population and points to the demographic inaccuracy of the “minority” terminology. The 2020 #BAMEOver survey looked into the terms that are most often used to refer to black or brown people from Africa, the Caribbean and the Indian subcontinent and found that “BAME” is not only no longer unreservedly accepted but in many academic papers it is being vigorously contested as it assumes and confers a shared homogenous identity and history for people coming from a wide range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds and history. It is important to also note that this discussion on ethnicity, colour, culture and nomenclature is evolving. It is further important to consider the impact of intersectionality on equal opportunity. Intersectionality means recognising that people’s identities are shaped by multiple factors (the many personal characteristics that make up an individual). Protected characteristics cannot be treated as discrete identities, as they can quite often overlap when discrimination occurs. An awareness of intersectionality creates a much better understanding of the differences among individuals.

¹¹ The fourth Mark of Mission of the Anglican Communion.

¹² Some may feel that this issue does not affect them, but there is nowhere in this Diocese, or even this country, where issues of diversity and inclusion are not raised. For example, on 4 February 2021, a church in Rottingdean, Sussex was forced by the Diocesan Chancellor to remove grave headstones because of the derogatory and racist language inscribed on them, and have them re-inscribed.

¹³ The ARC plan for each area of Diocesan life must include programming, engagement, action, change, evaluation, review and if necessary revision, and must reach to parish level as well as to Diocesan strategies if it is to be effective.

¹⁴ <https://historicengland.org.uk/whats-new/statements/slavery-heritage-research-audit/>

¹⁵ This advice is similar to that of the Director of Churches and Cathedrals at the Church of England, who also acknowledges that “it is not possible to provide a single position which could apply to all circumstances and which would satisfy all legitimate viewpoints”, and “dialogue alone is not sufficient, and must have real outcomes. These may include the alteration or removal of monuments. However, this must be done safely and legally, and we do not condone illegal acts”.



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Southwark