

Anti-Racism Charter

Case study: Southwark Diocese



Growing and learning as a diocesan family

The Diocese of Southwark is the third largest diocese in the Church of England, covering most of south London and east Surrey. It's also one of the most ethnically diverse dioceses – almost 40% of our churches are attended by Global Majority Heritage (GMH) congregations and a large proportion of the pupils in our schools are from ethnically diverse backgrounds. Our worship is diverse, too – there are currently eight bilingual congregations worshipping in 15 of our parishes – praising God in Farsi, Filipino, German, Japanese, Lugandan, Spanish, Urdu and Yoruba.

Perhaps because of our diversity, Southwark Diocese has been grappling with issues of racial justice as far back as 1985, following the appointment of Bishop Wilfred, who was the first GMH Bishop in the Church of England. Wood spearheaded a movement for racial justice and racial equity within the Diocese – and this has been part of our DNA ever since.

In 2021, our Diocesan Synod voted unanimously to approve the Anti-Racism Charter – an active and intentional response to the issues of discrimination and inequality that so many were witnessing and affected by in our communities at the time. But the publication of the ARC was the beginning of a journey, not our destination – it was a roadmap for all that needed to be addressed in this next phase of tackling inequalities in our diocese, and the work has continued ever since.

Seeing the change

One way we try to track our progress in this area is through regular data collection and research. An annual ethnicity survey of all our clergy and lay ministers (as well as those serving in key roles, such as Trustees and members of our Diocesan Synod) helps us to see how ethnically diverse our leadership and volunteers are. So far, the data shows us that we are steadily making progress in encouraging those from GMH backgrounds into these key roles.



A workshop at the the Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation Conference, 2025.

Additionally, as part of our nationally-funded Diocesan Investment Programme, we are also conducting a larger research project. Led by our Dean of Cultural Diversity and our Encouraging Vocations Researcher, this work seeks to explore people's experiences of our vocation and discernment processes and identify barriers to realising people's vocations, particularly for GHM candidates and others from under-represented backgrounds.

Our hard-working local and diocesan Racial Justice Committees help to steer and oversee this work, as well as identifying new opportunities and challenges in our communities. 2025 saw the appointment of two key nationally-funded roles in the diocesan staff team to progress this work – our Racial Justice Development Officer and a dedicated Training and Resources Officer. We have reviewed our staff recruitment, selection and induction processes and made it mandatory for all staff to engage with Unconscious Bias training – as well as offering that training to our parishes. Over the past few years, we have seen a welcome growth in the number of GMH staff working with us at all levels and across all teams.

In 2025, we published our Anti-Racism Charter study pack, to help parishes and small groups better engage with the principles of the ARC. These four short Bible studies enable groups to reflect locally on their community and congregation's needs, the assumptions we can make about one another and how we might begin to change our attitudes and practices to better reflect God's diverse kingdom.

Rising to the challenges of our time

During 2025, we also witnessed a significant rise in far right and racist rhetoric in the public sphere. Exploring how we can best respond to this has been identified as a key area of our work for 2026. As Co-Lead Bishop for Racial Justice, Bishop Rosemarie continues to make representation on a national level for the crucial importance of this work to our life as a Church.

It's such a joy that our diocesan schools continue to embrace and explore racial justice in exciting and creative ways – often leading the way when the 'grown ups' become complacent. Schools play a key role in so many of our diocesan events and it's been especially important for them to be involved in and help to shape our Black History Month celebrations each year.

As we look to the future, there will always be more to be done and new challenges to tackle. By God's grace, we trust that our congregations, leadership, staff and volunteers will increasingly reflect the communities that we serve – and we will continue to work towards the fully equality of all God's people.

Nicola Thomas
Diocesan Secretary



Nicola Thomas.



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Southwark**

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