BLACK HISTORY MONTH

OCTOBER 2019

Inspiring and resourcing churches from generation to generation

Walking | Welcoming | Growing
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Letter from the Bishop of Southwark

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ

From generation to generation: Celebrating BAME women in leadership

“Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed; for the Mighty One has done great things for me, and holy is his name. His mercy is for those who fear him from generation to generation.”

Luke 1: 48-50 [NRSV]

On Saturday 5 October, the Diocese of Southwark will celebrate Black History Month 2019 with a Service of Thanksgiving and an afternoon of events at Southwark Cathedral. From generation to generation: Celebrating BAME women in leadership will enable the Diocese to recognise and encourage the work of the Minority Ethnic Anglican Concern Committees, and the contribution of black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) people to the life and witness of the Church in this place.

As always, Black History Month offers all of us the chance to showcase the talents and creative skills of people from BAME communities in the Diocese, and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those whose service has done so much to enrich our Church.

As Black History Month approaches, please take the time to read these materials, which offer resources and inspiration to help you mark the occasion in your own churches, as we continue to live out our Vision of being a Church that welcomes all and embraces diversity.

With my thanks for your partnership in the Gospel,

[Signature]

Walking Welcoming Growing
Why celebrate Black History Month?

“If a race has no history, it has no worthwhile tradition, it becomes a negligible factor in the thought of the world, and it stands in danger of being exterminated.”

With these words, the historian and founder of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, Carter G Woodson, launched the first ever Negro History Week in February 1926, in the USA.

For Woodson and for many other African Americans, this annual celebration was a chance to put their experiences front and centre, and to highlight the achievements of their peers. It grew exponentially in popularity, and by 1976 had become a month-long initiative and rebranded Black History Month.

UK origins
In the UK, the first Black History Month took place 32 years ago, in October 1987. It was the brainchild of Akyaaba Addai Sebbo, then working for the Ethnic Minorities Unit at the Greater London Council, who had often campaigned and lectured on black pride in the USA and who saw the need for the same kind of acknowledgement of black history and achievement in this country.

A series of cultural events was staged, aimed at recognising the part played by black citizens in the cultural, economic and political life of London and the UK. Schoolchildren from all over Greater London filled the Royal Albert Hall for a week, listening to inspirational music and talks that celebrated Africa’s contribution to world civilisation.

The initiative was so successful it was decided to make it an annual event. October was chosen because of its associations with harvest and plenty, recognising a time when Egypt and Ethiopia were the cradle and breadbasket of the world.
Black history in Southwark
Since 2000, when it commissioned an independent inquiry into institutional racism in Diocesan structures, the Diocese has made strenuous efforts to address a lack of representation of BAME people, particularly in leadership roles. We now have some of the highest levels of BAME representation in the Church of England — but more can be done.

Black History Month is an important time in the Diocesan calendar for that reason. It offers the chance to reflect on and celebrate the lives and experiences of the Diocese’s 34% BAME population, among the highest proportion in the country.

It also offers the chance to act on the Southwark Vision and our strategic aims: to make this Diocese truly welcoming to all, and to grow leadership and representation that reflects the rich diversity of our Diocese.

Taking part
Since 2007, the Diocese has held an annual thanksgiving event to mark Black History Month at the Cathedral. The Diocese’s flagship Black History Month event this year will be held on 5 October from 10.30am-3.30pm at Southwark Cathedral. *From generation to generation: Celebrating BAME women in leadership* has been organised in partnership with the Mothers’ Union and features a service of thanksgiving. Bishop Christopher will preside at the Eucharist and Mrs Comfort Idowu-Fearon, the Diocesan Mothers’ Union president, will preach. In addition, there will be an afternoon of workshops on social justice, and lay and ordained leadership. See [southwarkbhm2019.eventbrite.com](https://www.eventbrite.com) to register — all are welcome.

We also want to encourage all parishes in running their own events. The following pages offer tips, prayers and sample liturgy for setting up a Black History Month event. We would ask that you share details of whatever you are doing to mark the month by e-mailing marlene.collins@southwark.anglican.org, to help us spread the word and give Black History Month the prominence it deserves. All Diocesan events will be listed online at [southwark.anglican.org/blackhistorymonth](https://southwark.anglican.org/blackhistorymonth). See page 14 of this booklet for more details.
Ideas for putting on an event

General guidance
Give yourself plenty of time and recruit a diverse team to plan activities. Think about the different ages and cultural backgrounds of your congregation and target audience.

Things to do or think about
• Black History Month falls during the season of Harvest and so many churches choose to put on a multicultural harvest supper celebration.
• Story-sharing evenings, where people listen to each other’s stories about their cultural background, childhood or growing up in a different time/place, are a great way to encourage understanding.
• Giving a project to the Sunday school to research, plan and deliver to the rest of the church around the topic of Black History Month helps to include children and young people.
• Choose songs, prayers and liturgy from other cultures within the Sunday service.
• Deliver sermons drawing from the experience, history or traditions of Christians around the world.
• Celebrate the diversity within your own church.

Resources
• This is a good secular resource for black British history: blackhistorymonth.org.uk/
• Churches Together in Britain and Ireland has put together some resources on Racial Justice Sunday and Black History Month: ctbi.org.uk/racial-justice-sunday-2019/
A modern prayer for Black History Month, based on the ‘Magnificat’

O Lord our God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son, conceived of the Holy Spirit, born to be our Saviour, by the Blessed Virgin Mary.

God the Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

God over all, rich and poor, black and white,

God, who is sovereign over all peoples, ethnos and nations.

My soul worships you, my spirit rejoices in Christ our saviour.

We pray for wisdom to follow Jesus Christ our Lord
in the way of salvation for all people — black and white.

Give us grace to confess our sins and grace to forgive others.

Humility to repent of our maltreatment of other people.

Forgive us our sins of prejudice, racism and bias,
and not loving others genuinely as Jesus Christ loves us.

Do not send us away empty, but give us a place in your love.
Thank you for loving us and exalting us to your heavenly family
Through Jesus Christ. Amen.

A reflection on the ‘Magnificat’
Luke 1: 46-55

“My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all people, from generation to generation, shall call me blessed. For he that is mighty has done great things; and holy is his name” (Luke 1: 46b-49).

Mary’s song, also known as the ‘Magnificat’, echoes the prayers of many women and prophets in the Holy Scriptures. The essence of the core message reminds me of the Hollywood movie *Hidden Figures*, the story of the African American women directly involved with the Space Race and the first expedition to the Moon.
In the movie, based on a true account, the women were the powerhouses, speaking about the pure mathematics of the space project. Yet, when the story was first told there was no mention of them or any suggestions that some black people had been involved in the project.

Today, I draw parallels with our Church life and the way in which, owing to our lack of openness to the work of the Holy Spirit in our mission, being and witness, we could become narrow-minded and self-centred. In doing so, we may become our own cheerleaders, ignoring what God is doing in other people around us. We could blank the ‘others’, out of our gaze, out of our collective story and out of our shared witness, as if they were not there, like Hidden Figures.

Mary celebrates the recognition she is afforded by the Almighty God and makes a song and dance of it. She rejoices in “God who has regarded her lowly estate”. God has a good way of recognising us and pointing us out in the crowd even when we try to hide. He has a way of bringing us out of hiddenness to the limelight through the love of his son, Jesus Christ. Mary also celebrates the fact that she is no longer a “Hidden Figure”. The Almighty has put her into the limelight and “All generations henceforth, will call her blessed”. This is Mary, the lowly handmaiden of the Lord, Anna’s child who was engaged to be married to Joseph, the Carpenter.

“The Almighty is Holy, and has shown his strength by scattering the proud in the imagination of their hearts, humbling the mighty and exalting the humble”, a Divine economy in complete contrast to the world’s ways. As we celebrate Black History Month, Mary speaks to us and for us. And, remember, our God works in mysterious ways, so the hidden figures are henceforth put into the limelight, the humble will be lifted up, the hungry will be filled with good things and mercy showered on them that fear or reverence God, the Father, the Son and the Spirit, from generation to generation.

Prayer and reflection by
the Rt Revd Dr Karowi Dorgu, Bishop of Woolwich
A prayer for Black History Month

Thank you Lord,
for you have made us in your image,
set us in families and communities.
Thank you Lord,
that we are not invisible to you.
Give us eyes to see those who may be feeling isolated and far from home.
Thank you Lord
for the many opportunities we have in our Diocese to meet and mix with others from different backgrounds, cultures and races.
We are all your people, our heritage and origins are gifts from you.
Enable us to support one another in our difference and uniqueness.
Help us to give space to each other to worship you and serve you together.
That your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

A reflection on visibility

The most surprising thing anyone has ever said to me in a church was.
“I need to talk to you! I’ve never seen anyone like you before in church! Why have I not seen you before?”

This was by a lay leader and it occurred to me that this person had felt very isolated and invisible and was delighted to see another Chinese-looking person!

I otherwise spend a lot of time with people who would also consider themselves to be invisible: refugees, asylum-seekers, people from backgrounds and cultures not highly represented in our society. People
who often say that they feel overlooked, their contributions to society undervalued and their potential unrecognised.

However, through the projects I lead as the churchwarden in my parish, as project manager at the ESOL (English as a second language) class at a neighbouring parish, and as the Refugee Response Coordinator for the Diocese, I feel blessed in being part of the warm welcome that they receive in our Diocese.

Through the response of many parishes who are currently involved in working with asylum-seekers and migrants, it is heartening to see that there is space for everyone and anyone. We minister in a hostile environment and have to work hard to overturn the false assumption that is sometimes unwittingly promoted that people from migrant cultures and races have less to offer.

On paper, Mary would have been invisible as a person from a small village, a young woman with no influence and her potential overlooked. However, God gave her one the biggest roles in His story. There are many other otherwise invisible women, including Ruth, Lydia and the woman from Samaria, who were also used significantly by God despite being perceived as the outsider.

The Earth is the Lord’s and everyone in it, so I am grateful that we are celebrating Black History Month as a Diocese, giving space to and recognising the ministry of our sisters and brothers whose heritage and background — like my own — is not the majority.

by Joanne McCrone, Churchwarden at the Good Shepherd with St Peter, Lee and Refugee Response Coordinator for the Diocese of Southwark
Prayers for racial justice

God of all peoples, we pray for all victims and targets of racial hatred, discrimination and injustice. We pray for your protection, especially for those affected in our churches, our institutions and in our communities. **Lord in your mercy, Hear our prayer.**

We pray for reconciliation through the work of God’s Spirit. Wherever there is division and divisiveness between us and others, because of our culture or ethnicity, we pray that we may all be led to reconciliation, understanding and acceptance. **Lord in your mercy, Hear our prayer.**

*(Taken from ‘Racial Justice Sunday 2017 — Justice For All’ by Scott Boldt in partnership with EMBRACE, Belfast, Northern Ireland)*

God who disrupts our neat boundaries, you whose truth is larger than we are. By your presence and through your spirit enlarge our minds and hearts, so that we may seek truth, catch a glimpse of truth, hear truth, learn truth, tell truth, live truth, your truth of the way of full life for all. **Amen.**


Dear Lord,
we consider those who are marginalised in our society, and ask that you give us your heart for those who are ignored, or whose voices are silenced. Give us eyes that see and ears that hear,
and the courage to stand up for justice, 
so that all those made in your image are treated with dignity.
And may our words and actions draw these, your children, to you, 
engraved on the palms of his hands, 
and whose Son came that all may have life and have it in abundance. 
This we ask in Jesus’ name. Amen.

(From ‘Roots’ magazine)

Our Lord and God Almighty, 
we praise you, 
for you created us all and made us 
into many different tribes and nations, 
that we may befriend one another 
and that we may not despise each other.
Open our hearts, we pray, 
so that we may respond to the needs 
of all our brothers and sisters.
Oh Lord Jesus, bless all our lands 
with more lasting peace and fraternal understanding.
Above all, heavenly Father, 
touch the hearts of our political leaders 
and all those in power.
We pray that they may exercise power gently, 
that they may humbly seek a disinterested dialogue 
that will bring about understanding, 
leading us all to a place where all nations and all people 
live together in peace and harmony.
Where there is bitterness teach us forgiveness and reconciliation, 
replace hatred with love and indifference with care.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Written by Aneth Lwakatare)
Upcoming events and contacts

We will be collating Black History Events taking place across the Diocese online at southwark.anglican.org/blackhistorymonth. If you are holding an event, please e-mail marlene.collins@southwark.anglican.org, so we can share it with others in the Diocese.

From generation to generation
The Diocese’s flagship Black History Month event, *From generation to generation: celebrating BAME women in leadership*, will take place on Saturday 5 October from 10.30am-3.30pm at Southwark Cathedral.

The day begins at 10.30am with a service of thanksgiving, followed by an afternoon of workshops. Bishop Christopher will preside at the Eucharist. Please book your place at southwarkbhm2019.eventbrite.com.

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