



## The Diocese of Southwark

**The Bishop of Southwark**

The Rt Revd Christopher Chessun

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To BAME Clergy in the Diocese

The Feast of Saint Peter and Saint Paul

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Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ

The deeply felt response to the killing of George Floyd, including much anger and rage, has acted as a challenge to us as we continue to confront racial injustice wherever it is found. This has never been far from my mind throughout my time in Southwark, first as Bishop of Woolwich and now as Bishop of the Diocese. It has been very telling in these recent weeks to hear so many different voices speak into these vital issues with passion and from personal experience, as well as with real historical and theological insight.

None of us can live through this time with eyes and ears open without being moved, but I am aware that the resonances for our BAME Clergy in this Diocese will have been particularly powerful. Different Priests will experience this in different ways, and feel called to respond in different ways. For some it will surely have brought significant personal experiences into focus, recalling past hurts or present challenges. I know that deep emotions have been stirred. Many will have felt the weight of community expectation to speak out. Indeed I have tried to play my part.

Against this background, I wanted simply to write to you to assure you of my prayers and my solidarity. The flourishing of BAME Clergy is one of my central concerns as Bishop. I rejoice in all the Priests of this Diocese, whose well being is one of my first priorities. However the nurturing of ministry by BAME Priests is particularly vital because it is so important that all our congregations should be able to see themselves reflected in the Clergy set among them to lead and to serve. In Christ, in whom there are no distinctions, it is of course possible to see ourselves reflected in any member of the human race, whatever our ethnic heritage. But this does not make acceptable the imbalances in the make up of our Clergy, particularly at a senior level. And, as we have been reminded so forcefully in recent days, these imbalances reflect historic evil as well as injustices that continue to this day. With all my colleagues, I am committed to taking further steps to address these issues in our shared life here in Southwark today.

Please, then, know that I am praying for you and concerned for you, and also thankful for the gift and blessing you are, as BAME Clergy in South London and East Surrey, to the Diocesan family. I would also be glad to hear from you if you wished to share any reflections to which recent events may have stirred you.

With my prayers and Blessing,

**The Rt Revd Christopher Chessun  
Bishop of Southwark**

Cc. Bishop's Senior Staff  
Area Deans  
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