

Racial Justice Charter

Purpose

This Charter lays out the principles which the Diocese of Worcester seeks to follow in response to the report 'From Lament to Action' published in 2021. It should be read in parallel with the Racial Justice Action Plan which gives detail to the actions being proposed.

Racial justice work is about preventing cases of racial discrimination and combating structural oppression. It involves working towards systemic change and solutions, by targeting the root causes of all types of racial oppression.

Background and Theological Basis

The Bible bears rich witness to the preciousness in the eyes of God to the unity in diversity of the human family. For example, in the story of creation in Genesis 1 and 2, all human beings are shown to come from Adam and Eve, and so share a common parentage. In the New Testament passages such as Galatians 3:28 affirm the inclusivity of the Church, and the unity and equality of all people under God: *'There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.'*

Tragically our world falls short of this ideal and although many of our churches are welcoming places to people of every race and background, there remains a need to ensure those from diverse races feel heard and are more visible in our congregations.

The killing of George Floyd in the USA in 2020 brought to the world's attention the cheapness with which black lives are too often held by those in positions of authority or influence. In the UK, the murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993 was a watershed event. The sequence of events following his death uncovered the racism in society and its institutions and led Lord Macpherson to coin the phrase 'institutional racism'.

Racist attitudes persist both in society at large and in its institutions towards people of colour and those of different racial origins. The Church of England has not been immune from such views. As a Diocese we express our shame at historic and continuing racism, whether it be conscious or unconscious, and our determination to take action as a matter of utmost priority to rectify our behaviour and ensure diverse voices are heard. We look to reflect and reform, in the hope of learning as much as possible from past errors and injustices, while also being innovative and daring in our desire to be a church that welcomes all of God's people.

Bishop Martin writes:

"Racial Justice must be at the heart of all that we do as Christians. We should do all we can to acknowledge and highlight both intentional and unintentional racism in our communities – it is always unacceptable for people to feel less simply because of the colour of their skin or the community in which they were born. We live in diverse communities in Worcestershire and Dudley, and we must work to ensure these are reflected in our churches."

It is hoped that through this Charter and our racial justice action plan, we can be a Church which acknowledges that we are incomplete and diminished without those who we have overlooked or not welcomed either in the past or the present. We want to recognise and thank all those who serve our churches and our communities, valuing diversity of all kinds. This will not always be an easy journey, but together we can work towards a more diverse Church and a just society for all God's children.

Charter principles

We therefore affirm the following principles, which are laid out in the context of our vision to live and grow as 'Kingdom People'. As the Body of Christ, we recognise our interdependence on one another and join together to:

Worship God

Through inclusive worship we commit to demonstrating that everyone is welcome and equal in God's sight.

- We welcome worship which celebrates the wonderful diversity of all God's people.
- We will encourage our ministers to preach on matters of racial justice, particularly marking Racial Justice Sunday.
- We will encourage the use of more diverse representations of Jesus and the apostles.
- We will check monuments and plaques to enable an appropriate response to any with connections to slavery and to give us a full understanding of the environment in which we worship.
- We will encourage the use of hymns, songs, prayers and liturgy that affirm the diversity of the world and the church and think about the language used within our worship.
- We will seek to be an outgoing Church, outward-facing, and drawing the best out of all who worship, serve, and engage with us.
- We commit to not just being a holy Church but to being holy people, recognising that it is actions and mindsets of individuals as much as institutions that matter to the achieving of a better, brighter world.

Make Disciples

Anti-racism practices don't simply touch the process of transforming unjust structures, they lie at the heart of the good news we tell about the ways in which Christ breaks down barriers between people and invites everyone to follow him.

- We aspire to have diverse congregations that reflect our communities and aim to support those from different backgrounds in taking on leadership and other visible roles.
- We will seek to ensure that our candidates for training for lay and ordained ministry reflect the diversity of our communities.
- We will train our ministers and other leaders on bias, justice and the effect of the dominant cultural assumptions that fail to reflect the full diversity of God's people.

Share Hope

We have a vision for a just society where everyone is valued for the gifts that they bring. As churches we should be at the forefront of telling stories of hope from every part of our communities.

- We will aspire to have a more diverse senior staff team.
- We will be alert to and receptive of the stories of Global Majority Heritage / UK Minority Ethnic people locally and internationally.
- We will seek to engage with those who are different from us, including learning from good practice in our church schools.
- We will ensure that the governance of our diocese reflects our diverse communities.

Transform Communities

As Christians we are called to speak out against injustice wherever it is found. We stand firmly alongside the many people whose bravery in telling their story has shone a light into past and present complicity with prejudice.

- We will seek to transform unjust structures of society.
- We will help people of diverse races to feel heard and be heard.
- We will seek to do our part in redressing and correcting historic and present injustices in our contemporary society, recognising racial injustices stem as much from broader socio-economic and cultural injustices and inequities, as much as from race itself.
- We will seek to engage with church schools on these issues through the diocesan Board of Education.
- We will encourage our churches and their local communities to research their involvement in historic racial injustice, including slavery.
- We commit to the service of others in all that we do, not cowed or restrained by conventions, public pressure, or worldly intimidation.
- We commit to being fearless and emboldened to speak out with wisdom and prudence in defence of the powerless, voiceless, and marginalised within communities, acting in the spirit of Christ.