

## DIOCESE IN EUROPE WORKING GROUP ON RACIAL JUSTICE RESPONSE TO THE ARCHBISHOPS ANTI-RACISM TASK FORCE PUBLICATION FROM LAMENT TO ACTION

The arrival of *From Lament to Action* of the Archbishops' Anti-Racism Task Force is timely and its call to action is urgent. This report published on Stephen Lawrence day reminds us that "institutional racism can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people." (quote from the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry Report).

The Archbishops' response to the publication of the report leaves us in no doubt that Racism is a sin. We can no longer deny or avoid the situation: *Anything which diminishes the value and beauty of each individual person, made in the image of God, is sinful. There is no place for it in the world, and we are determined to make sure there is no room for it in the Church* (see Archbishops response dt. 22.04.2021).

The report's 47 action points across the five areas of priority - participation, governance, training, education and young people – also include proposals, such as, how complaints of discrimination and racism could be dealt with in the future as well as responses to historic monuments and buildings that are of, what is called, *contested heritage* due to the links to slavery.

What makes this report significant is its impetus, scrutiny, direction and implementation. It seeks to address the 4<sup>th</sup> mark of mission – "to transform unjust structures in society." It seeks to address the causes and consequences of racial sin and to seize missional opportunities to benefit the body of Christ and the mission of God.

We, the Working Group of the Diocese in Europe on Racial Justice commend the work of the Anti-Racism Task Force and are grateful for the Archbishops' immediate commitment to implementing the following five recommendations with immediate effect within the Church of England as a whole:

1. 10 minority ethnic clergy to serve at General Synod from 2021-2026.
2. Minority ethnic participant observers to sit in the House of Bishops (as with women to the episcopate).
3. Establish a Racial Justice Commission to hold the Archbishops and leaders to account.
4. Establish a Racial Justice Directorate within the NCIs to monitor, deliver and hold accountable those responsible for implementing recommendations from the report.
5. Replace CMEAC with a new standing committee of the Archbishops' Council.

The efficacy of these recommendations will only be judged by our willingness to engage, adopt policy and change behaviour; and in doing so the Archbishops' Task Force calls us to exercise the mind of Christ and his identity.

In the light of the identity of the Diocese in Europe as an integral part of the Church of England, it is imperative that the new **Racial Justice Commission** of the Church of England address this fact in terms of also intentionally reflecting the voice of the Diocese in Europe in its deliberations including in the use of acronyms, since this could itself become a justice issue.

The Diocese in Europe has made significant progress on the subject through its Policy Statement "**BREATHING LIFE: An invitation to one and all within the Diocese to share in belonging together through Racial Justice.**" This Statement was widely discussed in the local contexts of the Diocese in Europe before it took its final form and was finally adopted by the Diocesan Synod as policy. It has been shared with the Archbishops', who have responded positively. "**BREATHING LIFE**" anticipates and mirrors many of the recommendations made in *FROM LAMENT TO ACTION* and members of the Working Group are already working alongside synods and chaplaincies to monitor participation and audit the presence and active engagement of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) members at every level of church life. *We have opted to spell out the acronym BAME in order that it enter the vernacular. Where this is not so, we are currently using the term **People of Colour** meaning a self-understanding of people who have experienced racism. Like the terms Black or White, the term People of Colour does not mean different shades of*

*colour here, rather it represents exclusion or marginalisation due to racism* (see Diocesan Policy Statement - *Breathing Life*). Within the Diocese in Europe the Working Group already functions as a team and fulfils the role of de facto Racial Justice Officers.

Unless every diocese makes the same stringent commitment to implementation and action; and every Archdeaconry Synod and Chaplaincy follows suit, the work of the Archbishops' Task Force will be in vain and the ghosts of Stephen Lawrence, Nicole Smallman, Bibaa Henry, George Floyd and Daunte Wright will haunt us for generations to come.

The Report ends applauding and naming those who have striven for racial justice in the Church of England over decades. That number could be multiplied a hundred-fold. For mutual flourishing through racial justice, we all need to champion their pioneering work and commit ourselves to the current recommendations with vigour and renewed zeal that "Christ is all and in all."

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