

London Diocesan Advisory Committee



RACISM AWARENESS PLAN

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1. INTRODUCTION

(a) The Committee recognises and welcomes its **duties**, namely:

- (i) to promote equality of opportunity;
- (ii) to prevent unlawful or improper discrimination, and to promote good relations between ethnic groups, within its area of work.

2. POLICIES

(a) The Committee has **assessed** and **consulted upon** approaches towards aspects of its work which have a bearing upon matters of racism awareness and upon the duties stated above, and the following have been identified:-

2.1. The approach of the Bishop and the Bishop's Council and those who advise them towards the appointment of members and consultants to the Committee

(a) The following is an extract from consultation letters which preceded appointment of the present Committee in 2001:-

"The Diocese wishes to ensure that the knowledge and experience of the Committee's membership properly reflect the needs and aspirations of the world at large as well as of parishes at the beginning of the 21st century. We consider it essential that the membership as a whole should have regard to the population which it is the Mission of the Church to serve, and to the need for equal access for all - to which the Christian Church has been committed from its foundation.

For the same reasons, the Diocese is also concerned to avoid discriminating in favour of or against any particular person on grounds including those of sex, race and ethnic background, and disability.”

(b) Ensuring that the appointment of members and consultants to the Committee reflects as broad as possible a range of cultures and ethnic groups may be difficult, but it is wholesome and necessary. When the whole membership was renewed in 2001, endeavours were made to ensure that the portfolios of responsibility and, based on them, the lists of names submitted to the Bishop's Council reflected these aspirations.

(c) People from minority cultural backgrounds may not always be at ease with self-promotion, especially as they might in the past have been deterred from volunteering to take responsibilities for which they were nevertheless well equipped. Active encouragement should therefore be given to persons in the Diocese with the relevant gifts and skills to come forward to fill roles as members and consultants when these become vacant. Any barriers arising for reasons of ethnic or cultural background should where possible be identified, then steps taken to eliminate or overcome them.

The Committee endorses the policy statement quoted above, and urges that it continue to be applied when filling any casual vacancies, subject always to the Bishop of London whose prerogative it is to make such appointments.

2.2. How the Committee and the Secretary's office handle dealings with parish clergy, officers and other applicants in the course of the Committee's work; also together with Members and Consultants to the Committee when on visits

(a) Clergy, wardens and other officers as well as local authority staff, professional consultants, the DAC's staff and all others with whom they communicate, represent a wide mix of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. It is the responsibility of the Secretary and other staff to treat every enquirer equally and with consistent courtesy. This not only requires staff to employ language and expressions, intonation and speech styles, which are accessible to whomever is being addressed, but also to gain an understanding of those of enquirers of whatever background. Particular attention is needed to conversations by telephone rather than face-to-face, because on the telephone it is not possible to see whom one is speaking to, nor his or her expression or gestures; the sound of another's speech, by itself, has to be relied on.

(b) Staff should avoid adopting an unnecessarily business-like or perfunctory tone which treats the enquirer as external and remote; rather, every effort should be made to engage individually with the person being addressed.

(c) The spelling of less common names should be read back to enquirers and carefully checked in correspondence. Accurate spelling and pronunciation of a name shows respect for the person to whom it belongs.

(d) At meetings and on visits, the same attention should be given to everyone present and their views.

Members of the Committee and staff shall show equal attention and respect to every individual, of whatever background, with whom they have dealings in the course of the Committee's work.

2.3. How the business of the Committee and sub-committees themselves is handled with fairness and without improper discrimination

(a) Regard should be had not only to cases in themselves, but also their history and background.

(b) For example, a non-Anglican ethnic minority congregation may be sharing the use of a church with the Church of England parochial congregation; or a sharing arrangement may be under consideration which has not previously existed. Any reluctance to alter arrangements to which either congregation may have become accustomed is deserving of proper consideration. Whatever legal arrangements may exist for sharing of the church, and any rights to terminate those arrangements, as well as the accommodation needs of the congregations concerned, are matters to be determined elsewhere rather than by the DAC; but that should not prejudice an objective and fair consideration by the Committee of the respective uses which exist and are envisaged, their appropriateness to the needs which they are to answer, how others will be affected thereby in their use of the church, the intrinsic character of the church concerned, and how its character or significance would be improved or damaged by any change. Articles and places which may seem of little value from a limited white western perspective may well be of great significance to those of another culture, or from a multi-cultural standpoint. The Committee should evaluate needs and significance from the point of view of congregations and other users, not just according to its own lights.

(c) The Committee should normally take as its starting point the wishes and proposals of the Incumbent and Parochial Church Council together with the Churchwardens, after consulting all interested parties, including the principal congregation, other congregations and user groups, and outside bodies including representatives of the local community who have a legitimate interest.

When considering applications for advice in faculty cases and any other works to churches, churchyards and burial grounds, the Committee will continue to have regard to relevant implications of the history and background to each case, and to the needs of all users as well as the significance of places and objects from their point of view.

2.4. To what extent the Committee and its business may reflect traditional white western values, but not so much those of the broad range of cultures and ethnic groups represented in parishes and congregations

(a) A distinction needs to be admitted between buildings and their fixtures on the one hand, and loose contents and the activities of users on the other. Since this is England, it is mainly English traditions of art and architecture which are reflected in our physical and fixed heritage, and which need to be cherished. This is rightly reflected in the Committee's work.

(b) However, these things are used and enjoyed by congregations with members of a wide variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, all of whom rightly want to introduce articles and celebrate practices which reflect their diverse traditions. These should joyously permeate a church's music and worship and all other activities in the church. Every tradition must be recognized, respected and encouraged; the Committee must ensure that equal time and attention are given to applications which will enable this to happen, and that the same quality of discriminating expertise (both in favour of and against whatever is proposed) is brought to bear on them.

(c) The Committee should also nurture the understanding of historic English traditions by those of other backgrounds, and vice-versa, when the two, or rather many, come into contact; looking favourably upon schemes in which uses and artefacts belonging to all are disposed in a well-judged and sensitive manner in relation to each other. Canons of theological, artistic and functional criticism and appraisal should be applied which are appropriate to the culture whose products they are being applied to. This is a great challenge for any DAC, but an exciting one.

The Committee shall encourage the use, appreciation and enjoyment of historic churches and contents as examples of English traditions of architecture, art and music; whilst promoting the introduction and integration within churches of the best examples of the work of other cultures and traditions represented in our congregations, and in turn their appreciation and enjoyment by church members of white British and/or English ethnic background.

2.5. How the Committee can ensure that information held upon architects and surveyors, quinquennial inspectors, artists and craft workers, and which is made available to parishes, gives equal opportunities to those of all ethnic groups

(a) The DAC's approval is required when a church appoints an architect or surveyor as its quinquennial inspector. Appointees are entered in a register held by the Secretary, together with information upon their qualifications and experience, which they submitted when nominated. Short lists can be made available to parishes, on request, for them to consider who to nominate. This process has not so far been subject to ethnic monitoring; the composition of quinquennial inspectors working in the diocese is therefore not known.

(b) Decisions in this area should continue to be taken without regard to ethnic background. At the same time, accurate comparative information on ethnicity should be gathered, by enclosing an ethnic monitoring sheet with the form to be completed by prospective new inspectors, and by existing inspectors who wish to update their details. To justify collecting such information, the information collected must influence the balance of appointments, without affecting the outcome of any individual nomination. Depending on what is found when we have information on which to base valid conclusions, ways may need to be found to encourage greater numbers of under-represented groups to come forward. The monitoring form should state that the information given will not affect the decision on whether or not to consent to the appointment of the individual con-

cerned, but its purpose is to gain accurate information on how successfully multi-ethnic participation is being promoted overall.

(c) The Committee is currently engaged upon a programme of active recruitment of prospective QIs, to fill vacancies created by retirements, which are likely to increase in the foreseeable future. Persons from ethnic minority backgrounds may be identified from their other work of which the Committee has knowledge, for example through faculty applications, and such persons may be invited to put their names forward for consideration as prospective quinquennial inspectors, subject to appraisal and interview in the usual way. The availability of persons from ethnic minorities will however be limited by the composition of the professions concerned, and by the output of newly qualified persons from universities and colleges, over which the Diocese can exert little if any influence.

(d) Similar considerations apply to the register of artists and craftsmen working in the Diocese, which the Care of Churches Measure requires the Secretary to maintain. This register includes all persons and firms involved in work for which a faculty application is made. Commissions are a matter for the parish or PCC or other applicant, and do not require the DAC's consent; even though the work concerned will usually require a faculty. No separate application is needed to be entered in the register as such: details are taken directly from papers submitted with the faculty application. It may be possible to identify artists and craftsmen from minority ethnic backgrounds already involved in comparable work, to seek information on what they are doing and in turn bring it to the attention of enquirers. This may be done in collaboration with organisations such as the Council for the Care of Churches and the UK Institute for Conservation. It will also assist in achieving the ends set out in item 4 above.

The Committee shall promote the inclusion of persons of minority ethnic background when considering the appointment of quinquennial inspectors in the diocese, when making entries in the register of professionals, artists and craft workers, and when bringing to the attention of enquirers the availability of suitably qualified persons.

3. MONITORING

(a) Progress towards achieving the aims set out above should be **monitored** and, where possible, **measured**.

(b) Before preparing its annual report to Diocesan Synod, the Committee shall therefore conduct a **review** of actions taken under each heading and observable results therefrom, and make an **assessment of progress** made. The Annual Report shall then include a section summarising the **conclusions** of this assessment.

(c) This may be followed by proposals for any **modifications** to the Committee's policies, procedures and working methods to achieve further progress in the next year.

4. CONCLUSION

(a) It is taken as an axiom that racism wherever it may occur is an evil; this Committee, joining hands with all other diocesan organizations should avoid unwittingly contributing to it, either individually or as an institution.

It is not necessary only to combat an evil in a negative way. Rather, it is very desirable and stimulating to encourage mutual cultural understanding and enrichment, to embrace and celebrate and honour the range of different groups and individuals who contribute to the Church's life - and by that means to enhance the worship and mission of a Church in which there is "neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, but all are one in Christ Jesus".

**London Diocesan Advisory Committee
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