



**MORE RACIALLY
JUST**

Ten Point Action Plan – Parishioners Guide

Racial Justice Priority Group
September 2023

1. Recognise your privilege and its meaning

An acknowledgment of the issue of racial injustice and its systemic and institutional nature.

- *Start with recognising your own circumstances and privilege and its meaning in wider society.*
- *Think about what role you are playing in reinforcing systemic racism*
- *Understand that privilege is something society confers on those racialised as 'white' and it is incumbent on you to change the institutions which confers this on you. If not, you will continue to have it and contribute to racist outcomes however noble your intentions for change*

2. Explore and address your prejudice

An honest look at ourselves and our churches and where we are in relation to the issue of racial injustice.

- *Be open to examining your unconscious prejudices, attitudes and stereotypes to GMH/UKME people and other racialised groups.*
- *Think about how you might open yourself up to challenge around this recognising that it is the product of societal norms, culture and media which reproduce them*

3. Educate yourself

Bridging the knowledge gap. What is it like to be a person from GMH/UKME background in the UK today? Understanding the historical context. The damage to the psyche of GMH/UKME people by sustained and systemic racism.

- *Learn about the history of racism and how it manifests itself and who it impacts*
- *Make an effort to engage in the array of reading materials available, documentaries and movies*
- *Attend intercultural worshipping events to learn about different cultures and traditions*
- *Be an active participant in unconscious bias and anti-racism training programmes*

4. Educate others

Be open to modelling inclusive language and behaviours within your families, churches and communities.

- **As a parent** – *introduce your child to a diverse range of reading materials being intentional about selecting stories that show GMH/UKME people as heroes rather than in a way that reinforces negative stereotypes.*
- **As an educator** – *host EDI' days and celebrate Black History Month and Understand your churches/institutions anti-racist priorities and policies*
- **As a Youth worker** – *access youth resources i.e. Youthscape, (www.youthscape.co.uk) that teaches anti-racism to younger worshippers*

5. Be an active anti-racist ally

Using our platforms to speak out against the evil of racism. This can be speaking out into the larger society but also speaking out into our own churches and organisations.

- *Consider how you can support organisations to amplify an anti-racist message i.e., time or donations*

- *Give space to minority voices and help decrease the impact of hate speech by developing counter narratives*
- *Participate in intercultural worship events and campaigns*
- *Review how you welcome GMH/UKME people into your churches*
- *Are those in leadership representative of the communities they serve?*

6. Respond to Racism within your church

Using our influence and reach to be advocates for racial equality.

- *When you witness racism do something about it – apathy is helpful to no-one and hurts the victim even more as this behaviour is interpreted as acceptance by the perpetrators*
- *Take seriously even the smallest hint of hate – racist slurs can often escalate into harassment*
- *Reach out to allies – don't be afraid to reach out to others or specialist organisations for help and guidance in tackling issues and to reduce your fear.*

7. Support those affected by racism

Recognise injustice when it happens, those affected will be looking to those around them to intervene and for support

- *Don't be a bystander - react! Be aware of how to stand up to racism as turning a blind eye can be as hurtful as the slur itself*
- *Offer support – Let them know what you witnessed and support them in raising this and reporting it. Don't underestimate the impact of racist trauma and the silencing effect it can have*
- *Let victims know you care – Be genuine in your concern for a victim, don't try to justify or trivialise their experience as this undermines the whole experience instead help support them through the reporting process*

8. Report Racism

Always report racism – whether you have witnessed, experienced or heard it

Racist incidents that are not reported cannot be addressed

9. Be an anti-racism advocate

Advocates can make a huge difference in dismantling the structures and practices that allow racism to flourish within our churches.

- *Support this work through prayer and signing up to the racial justice prayer bulletin on the diocesan website.*
- *Consider whether your parish reflects the diversity of the community at all levels
Is your parish culturally inclusive to all people and do leaders reflect this*

10. Pressure Leaders

Seek allies amongst leaders in the church and in the community

- *elected officials within church can be instrumental in demonstrating practical support for anti-racism*
- *Is your PCC reflective of the community or church membership?*

¹ Adapted from Holy Trinity Brompton, Racial Justice and Equality, <https://www.htb.org/racialdiversity> [accessed on 12 Feb 2022]

Questions for Reflection

These questions can be reflected on as individuals, leaders, staff team or as a PCC.

Note: *If there are GMH/UKME members within your group when completing this evaluation there are two mistakes that can be made. Every GMH/UKME person's experience is different and unique. They do not represent the entire GMH/UKME community. They will neither want to be singled out as experts to carry this entire discussion, nor will they want to be ignored. They will require a safe space to contribute at their own pace when they feel ready, and to have their voice heard.*

1. Share your reactions to Bishop Graham's paper on 'Grace and Race' (found below)
2. Do you think Racial Justice is a priority for your Leaders, PCC and your Parish? If not, why not?
3. Are you aware of the issues that impact your GMH/UKME members? (White privilege, lack of empathy, microaggressions, mental health and wellbeing).
4. Do you embrace difference and seek to learn from it? Or do you feel challenged by difference and seek to deny it exists? Are you open to be changed, or do you seek to change others?
5. Just because you can't see racism around you does not mean it isn't happening. How could you develop a 'safe' environment where GMH/UKME members present in your church can regularly share their experiences and feelings?
6. In your opinion, would a GMH/UKME member consider you an ally who would champion their cause; or part of the problem? And why?
7. The early church was known for its radical love and unity. Where is this evidenced today? How can we reflect God's love more fully?
8. What experiences do you have of being led or managed by a person of a different ethnicity? How can you better engage with racial justice in your church?
 - a. unconscious bias training
 - b. conversations around race sessions facilitated externally
 - c. collaboration with other minority groups
 - d. promote intercultural placements
 - e. review role/job descriptions for bias
 - f. focus outreach, internships and work experience to attract GMH/UKME candidates
9. What specific actions are you taking this year to increase inclusion? (See 10-point action plan)
10. How could you start a conversation with a GMH/UKME member within your church to find out what issues matter to them?

Bishop Graham's reflection, Grace and Race

Let's be honest. Many of us (though not all) in the church have often felt in the past that questions of race and ethnicity are at best marginal, at worse a distraction from the gospel. When I did my initial theological training in the 1980s, I don't recall any particular discussion of race. It seemed like a special interest of a few people, and not something essential to think or do anything about.

Yet I for one have begun to discover that questions around ethnic and cultural diversity are not marginal, but in fact take us to the heart of the gospel – not least because St Paul seems to have thought they did. There was a well-known occasion, referred to in Galatians 2.11- 14, when Peter started to feel uncomfortable about meeting and eating in a mixed group of Jews and Gentiles in the church in Antioch. Eating together had great symbolic and social significance at the time and such a gathering implied to him and to others that the ethnic distinction between Jew and Gentile was no longer of fundamental importance. Under pressure from the more conservative Jewish-Christian groups, probably from the Jerusalem church, Peter started to withdraw from such mixed racial gatherings.

You might have thought Paul would have respected Peter's choice, and let it pass. Each to his own, you might say. Not a bit of it. This was, for Paul, something so crucial that he opposed Peter 'to his face'. Remember this was Peter the Apostle, who had known Jesus in the flesh, upon whom Jesus had said he would build his church, the one who had an unparalleled position of authority within the church. Opposing Peter in this way was risking Paul's entire ecclesiastical career if he can be said to have had one at this stage!

Why did Paul think this was such a big deal? A recent book by the Professor of New Testament in Durham University, John Barclay, explores Paul's theology of Grace. He shows how first century Greek and Roman culture was organised around a competition for honour and respect. Gifts and favours were a common way of lubricating social relationships and in that context, gifts would be given to those who were deemed to be worthy of the donor's generosity. The expectation was those gifts would be reciprocated to cement alliances, create relationships and enhance one's own social standing and respect within wider society. Roman citizens would not generally give gifts to the poor because they could not return the gift, leading to embarrassment all round.

God's gift of Jesus Christ however had been given irrespective of ethnicity, gender, wealth or status. It was a gift of grace that paid no attention to the worth of the recipient (although it did still expect a response and a change of life - it was unconditioned but not unconditional). This was the radically new

message of the gospel, that the grace of the God of Israel was now available to all people, no matter what their racial background.

Peter's action therefore implied that the gift was just like other gifts in that culture, given only to the worthy, on the basis of ethnic identity, primarily to Jewish people and only secondarily to Gentiles. It implied that Gentiles were not full members of the community because of their race, and because the gift was, after all, given according to ethnic status or identity.

That's why Paul thought Peter's action was such a betrayal of the gospel and could not just be allowed to pass. It was not ethnicity, status or wealth, but the gracious gift of God that was the currency that mattered in these new experimental communities on the edge of empire, centered around the grace, or generosity of God. This just didn't fit with the normal categories of honour, gift and race at the time.

Instead, baptism gave a radical new identity – formed not around the Jewish Law, social status, or any other identity marker for that matter, but the presence and gift of Christ and the Holy Spirit – what Paul called a 'new creation' (2 Cor 5.17). It is why we give babies a new name at their baptism - a Christian name, different from their received family surname, indicating their new self in Christ, that their identity is not defined by family reputation, but by the worth given to them in Jesus Christ.

If in our structures, our forms of leadership and normative culture within the church we privilege one particular culture, making those from other cultures feel second rate or allowed in as visitors but not really valued as fully participant and valued members of the church, then we are making the same mistake as Peter did. We are denying the gospel of grace that is offered regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, wealth or status.

Presumably Peter himself had to re-think his own attitudes in the light of this incident. He had already seen the need for Gentiles to be brought into the new community (Acts 15.7- 11) yet he still had more to discover as to the full implications of what this meant.

Attitudes to race are complex – the world is not neatly divided into racists or non-racists. We are all on a journey to discover the significance of God's radical gift of grace.

Grace and race are linked together. It is vital that we are able to create churches that are welcoming to all cultures and deliberately try to form genuine intercultural space which enables the expression and gift of all cultures to be received in the context of Christian faith. Prejudice is subtle and we often underestimate the gifts of others due to our own preconceived ideas about people who are unlike us. This does not mean ignoring or being ashamed of our own particular cultures, but both critiquing them when they are sinful and valuing them when they reflect God's boundless wisdom. As Barclay puts it: "mutual welcome will require the members to relativise their traditions - not necessarily to

abandon them, but to subordinate them to the higher goal of serving Christ.”

It is the gospel, not a secular agenda that drives the Church’s vision to combat racism and to see our churches genuinely reflect the varied and multi-faceted wisdom and grace of God in Christ. If we are able to respond to this with humility, creativity and a willingness to learn, we might just enable something to emerge in our churches that is truly glorious, beyond what we are able to anticipate or image. We might see churches in London and beyond that truly reflect God’s generosity of welcome and that reflect, not just the diversity of our city, but the city which is to come – the city of Grace.

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