

26 April 2021

To all Diocese of London Clergy, lay staff, Churchwardens, PCC secretaries, Deanery Synod Lay Chairs, members of the Diocesan Synod and members of the Bishop's Council

Dear friends and colleagues,

We write in response to the Report of the Archbishops' Anti-Racism Taskforce: From Lament To Action. We are clergy (area deans of cultural diversity) and diocesan employees in the Diocese of London who, for the last nine months, have been meeting as part of the Racial Justice Priority Group to study and reflect together, to discern ways forward for the Diocese's racial justice work, and to advise senior colleagues how best to respond to some of the challenges we currently face.

We know racism exists within our Church, just as it exists in our society more widely. Ephesians 3.17-18 offers a prayer that we "being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ." Our inability or refusal to reflect the love that God has for each of us, and to treat all of God's holy people in a just, loving, and respectful way, is a cause of sorrow and repentance.

We thank the members of the Anti-Racism Taskforce for the costly work that they have undertaken, in both summarizing the commitments and inactions of the past, and in setting out, with clear timescales, some specific actions that need to be implemented now. We welcome the challenge the Anti-Racism Taskforce has set us, and we call on the Diocese of London to repent of the sin of racial injustice: to turn away from racism and be reconciled, so that we may all experience the love of God. As the title of the Taskforce's report suggests, simply accepting that racial injustice is real is not good enough: we want to work together for a more racially just church and society. In the words of James 2.17, "faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead." Without actions to right our wrongs, words alone will only entrench the discrimination and division that the Anti-Racism Taskforce so starkly outlines.

The Diocese has made racial justice a key priority within its 2030 Vision. In the coming weeks, months, and years we must work together to bring about culture change. We will pay close attention to the work of the new Racial Justice Commission, whose work will be crucial in guiding both the national response and our own response in London. We particularly welcome the clarity with which the Report sets out actions and intentions which we too have identified as vital to our racial justice work in London. These include, but are not limited to:

- A commitment to theological study and reflection, to learning together under God;
- Greater attention to truth telling and representation, in diocesan life, in the education provided through church schools, and in responding to the legacy of slavery represented in monuments/memorials in our churches;
- Ensuring equality, diversity, and inclusion in our leadership and governance; promoting culture change to ensure racial justice throughout church structures.

We lament the fact that the diocese has not taken the opportunity of addressing the issues of racial inclusion in our senior posts in the past and see the upcoming vacancy in the see of Willesden as an opportunity to bring UKME representation to the London College of Bishops; we are glad to be part of the consultation process about the future shape of that post. We are clear that the current lack of racial diversity among our senior leaders hinders mission in London, and that this lack needs proactively to be addressed through a culturally sensitive discernment and recruitment process.

We are blessed to live and serve within one of the most richly diverse cities in the world. We long for every Londoner to know the love of God in Jesus Christ. However, we cannot truly say at the moment that in our Diocesan structures, in our churches, and amongst our people, we properly reflect, understand, and represent all Londoners. We must and will do better to ensure the Diocese is fully equipped for mission, with the full gifts of all Londoners being present in our leadership and governance, and all levels of our life together.

We invite you to join with us in this work, repenting of the injustice to which we have contributed, yet holding onto the hope that, together with all the Lord's holy people, we can fully live out the love of God in Christ in this city.

Stephanie Ajayi
Monica Bolley
Amatu Christian-Iwuagwu
Wilson Gill
Sprinkle Harrison
John Hawkins
Sandra McCalla
Taemin Oh
Jason Roach (co-chair)
Arani Sen
Richard Springer
Joanne Woolway Grenfell (co-chair)

Members of the Diocesan Racial Justice Priority Group