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## Racism: will we miss the opportunity?

Niv Lobo

## Black lives indeed matter

Oyin Oladipo

## The gospel and race

Ro Mody

## Meeting racism with grace

Aneal Appadoo



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# Racism: will we miss the opportunity?

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**Niv Lobo explores the reasons why we might not be using scriptural resources to address racism.**

An honest, fruitful conversation about racism is fraught with difficulties. Offence seems all too easily given (and taken), and the stakes vertiginously high: nobody wants to be labelled a racist. Those of us from an ethnic minority background can also fear that beginning the conversation will be seen as self-serving. But recent events – the murder of George Floyd in the USA and the ensuing protests affirming that Black Lives Matter – have made an imperative of addressing racism, and we in the church are not exempt from that. This is an opportunity for a long overdue conversation.

Past experience leads me to fear, however, that we might miss this opportunity. On the very rare occasions I've addressed racism from a Christian perspective, I've had some white brothers and sisters dismiss me as 'obsessed' with the issue. As long as we dismiss the experiences of non-white Christians with racism as essentially insignificant, or a fashionable distraction, we forfeit opportunities to grow in godliness.

Clearly there are unparalleled resources in the gospel to address this issue: this opportunity should translate into fruitful reflection on Scripture and renewed application of it in our churches. But not if we resist thinking through this issue. Why might we end up missing this opportunity? I want to suggest three reasons: a colour-blind approach to theology, a preoccupation with refuting secular

anti-racism which blinds us to the potential validity of their protest, and – underlying both of them – a subtle failure to distinguish Scripture's authority from that of its interpreters.

## **Colour-blind theology**

Although I have experienced hostility on the grounds of race in churches, my experience has more often been one of well-intentioned 'colour-blindness'. In an attempt to eschew prejudice of any kind, my race was never addressed or mentioned. While commendably striving for equality, we ought to recognise such 'colour-blindness' as an unacceptably unbiblical short cut. It is fatally flawed because God isn't colour-blind. As loving Creator, he delights both in our common humanity and in our diversity. Since he has made human beings in his image, any partiality or prejudice is scandalous to him. But the dignity of being made in God's image doesn't efface the rich diversity of created humanity: in Revelation 7:9, his goal is to redeem a multiracial, multiethnic, multilingual, multicultural people to praise him forever. A colour-blind approach can see no reason to rejoice in Revelation 7:9's vision, and therefore ought to be rejected.

Scripture furnishes us with the resources for a richer anthropology, doing justice both to our longings for equality (providing grounds for such equality that no other ethical vision can match) and the reality of our diversity, enabling truly multicultural communities. But colour-blindness keeps us from making the most of these resources.

*'After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.'*

Revelation 7:9

### Refuting the world without registering their protest

Secular protest movements ought to encourage us to listen to those who have experienced racism in the church. They can potentially unveil our blind spots in this area. We don't need to affirm the philosophical outlook of the Black Lives Matter movement – given its stated views on gender, the family and even Middle Eastern politics, we would be unwise to do so – in order to learn from it.

An example here might be 1 Corinthians 5:1 – there, the church had fallen into such sin that even the pagan world was scandalised. Worse, the church's blind spots meant that they didn't even recognise the horror of their sin. When Paul appeals to worldly moral standards, it isn't to endorse a pagan ethical vision, but rather to shock the Corinthians into recognition: even pagans deplore the sinfulness of your actions!

Because Jesus is Lord, God's cause directs our lives over and above any earthly cause. But 1 Corinthians 5:1 raises the possibility that the world's moral standards might sometimes lead us to recognise our sin. If our opposition to 'Black Lives Matter' as a movement qualifies our ability to affirm that black lives matter, then the extent to which we are caught up in the zero-sum dynamic of secular discourse is exposed, to our shame. As important a task as identifying the errors of secular anti-racism must be, it is one-sided without acknowledging and addressing the issues of racism which gave rise to it.

The philosophical underpinnings of secular anti-racism need to be exposed, and an

## Prayer Diary: October

**Please pray every day that God's blessing will be on Church Society to sustain it and guide its ministry.**

- 1 Pray that during the coronavirus outbreak people in our nation would be more receptive to hearing the gospel.
- 2 Pray that Church Society's online ministry would be an encouragement to evangelical Anglicans during this continued time of social restriction.
- 3 Evenlode, St Edward (Gloucester) – Rector, Richard Rendall.
- 4 Pray for elderly and vulnerable Christians to be protected from the coronavirus, and for those who are isolated to find comfort and strength in the Lord.
- 5 Pray for Regional Directors, Mark Wallace and George Crowder, to be effective in supporting gospel ministry across the country, and to work well with local and regional networks.

*Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving.*

Colossians 4:2

- 6 Pray for the Prime Minister, the Health Secretary, and the chief medical and scientific officers, that they and those who work with them will have wisdom and insight sufficient for the decisions they need to make at this difficult time.
- 7 Exeter, Holy Trinity (Exeter) – Vicar, Jonny Elvin.
- 8 Pray for the Church Society Council as they meet today, for useful discussions and wise decisions. For Andrew Towner as Chairman.
- 9 Pray for Christians in our nation to grow closer in their walk with God, and to use their time wisely during this period of social isolation and restriction.
- 10 Fowey, St Fimbarrus (Truro) – P-in-C, Ian Gulland. Pray for good relationships and unity in the gospel amongst all evangelical Anglicans in Fowey.
- 11 Freethorpe & Reedham (Norwich) – Vacancy.

*The gospel challenges everyone in this conversation. For me, the challenge is to recognise that my Indian ethnicity is part of the 'me' God has created and is renewing in Christ.*

uncritical adoption of its tenets by the Church is clearly unconscionable. But deconstructing secular responses to racism is not the same as dealing with the racism they rightly decry – and we must do both.

#### **Our pride problem: when Scripture's authority is transferred to its interpreters**

I want to suggest that beneath these two aspects lies something deeper. In conversations about race, I've often encountered a prideful elision of the authority and inerrancy of Scripture with that of its interpreters. The basic logic runs as follows: 'Scripture speaks against racism, as it does all sin. Because we have a high view of Scripture and are committed to expository preaching, our ministry will therefore address sin sufficiently.' Discussing racism, then, is a distraction from the chief task at hand: the consecutive exposition of Scripture, a panacea to this and all other ills.

Scripture's sufficiency is a non-negotiable truth, and the value of expository preaching much in evidence. But it would be a mistake to assume that the authority and inerrancy of Scripture translates into authoritative and inerrant preachers. Many passages of Scripture explicitly address questions of ethnic tension or racial reconciliation, and yet I have heard expository sermons on them which barely (or even never) mentioned them, let alone applied them robustly.

When a right confidence in Scripture is yoked to an unwarranted confidence in ourselves as its interpreters, this begets a host of blind spots. A monochrome, predominantly public-school culture presents itself as normative – as if it weren't a culture itself – while what deviates from it can be dismissed

as culturally formed. When, for example, Asian or African Christianity is marked by a greater degree of emotional expressiveness in corporate worship, that is a sign of being influenced by their culture. When *our* corporate worship is marked by the opposite, that reflects our objectivity: we're just following the Bible. Little wonder, then, that the faces of ethnic diversity in our churches are found on posters on our walls rather than flesh-and-blood people in our pews.

#### **The gospel has all the answers – but they are accessible only to the humble**

Of course the gospel yields unique resources to address racism: Jesus, and only Jesus, makes sense of life and of us. In the doctrine of original sin, we find a way to articulate the ugly depths of self-interest underlying prejudice and discrimination. It doesn't surprise us to hear that we are more sinful even than we knew! But this doctrine is actually kinder than its secular equivalents. It doesn't allow for the pride which looks down on others, or foster an ultimately brittle self-righteousness. And, of course, those who identify themselves as sinners are perfectly placed to meet the One who came for *them*, as a doctor for the sick. In the communion of the saints, we get a lively foretaste of Revelation 7:9. From Asian and African fathers of the church to the witness of enduring faith in Jesus demonstrated by persecuted believers all over the world, there are glimpses of the Church as a community uniquely able to transcend division across ethnic, racial, cultural and linguistic lines. And these are just two examples; there are many more resources to be found in the gospel to dismantle the sin of racism.

But these gospel resources are only ours on the condition of humility: repentance and faith are how we access them. We have no right to these resources if we take them up only in order to justify ourselves or minimise wrongdoing in our churches.

This means that the gospel challenges everyone in this conversation. For me, the challenge is to recognise that my Indian ethnicity is part of the 'me' God has created and is renewing in Christ. It is wrong to flee that identity in order to conform to the white ideal of conservative evangelicalism, and equally wrong to weaponise it in order to amplify my voice. For white brothers and sisters, the challenge might be to discern what truth there might be in what I've written – rather than immediately appeal to exceptions we can name in our churches to dismiss my perspective and experience outright.

The gospel calls us to a different kind of conversation: not one dictated by identity politics, ever more fragmentary as its participants seek the moral high ground. But one in which our confidence in Scripture grounds our humility in listening and learning, convinced that the vision of Revelation 7:9 – though unattainable by human means – is God's purpose, towards which he is steering human history. God forbid we miss the opportunity before us to live in the light of that coming reality: let the conversation begin.



*Niv Lobo is an ordinand at Wycliffe Hall, and a member of Church Society Council.*

## Prayer Diary: October

- 12** Pray that the Lord would raise up workers for the harvest field and particularly for men to come forward for ordination in the Church of England.
- 13** Pray for Rod Thomas in his responsibilities as Bishop of Maidstone.
- 14** Frettenham (Norwich) – Incumbent, Christopher Englesen.
- 15** Pray for the Queen and the Royal Family.
- 16** Frodingham North\* (York) – Rector, James Grainger-Smith.
- 17** Pray for clergy (both employed and unemployed) looking for posts.
- 18** Pray today that the leaders in the Church of England would clearly proclaim the gospel when they have opportunities to speak to the nation.
- 19** Fulham St Mary, West Kensington (London) – Vacancy.
- 20** Pray for the ministry of Church Society Trust, our patronage board meeting today, for wise appointments in all our Trust parishes.
- 21** Garsdon, All Saints (Bristol) – P-in-C, Stephen Wilkinson.
- 22** Pray for the Directors and staff of Church Society, to work well together for the cause of the gospel.
- 23** Gaulby (Leicester) – HfD, Brian Davis.
- 24** Pray for the continuing witness of the *Thirty-Nine Articles*. For the Church of England to uphold them and ensure that they are taught and valued.
- 25** Gloucester Mariners – Vacancy.
- 26** Greenhithe, St Mary (Rochester) – P-in-C, Charlotte Lloyd-Evans.
- 27** Pray for all Anglican theological colleges, and especially today for Oak Hill College and their President, Johnny Juckes.
- 28** Pray for the Church of England Evangelical Council (CEEC) as they contend for the gospel in the CofE.

A photograph of a protest. In the foreground, a person wearing a red hood holds up a large, hand-drawn sign on a piece of cardboard. The sign reads: "IT'S A PRIVILEGE TO EDUCATE YOURSELF ABOUT RACISM INSTEAD OF EXPERIENCING IT!!!". The background is a blurred crowd of people at what appears to be a demonstration or protest, with some individuals wearing masks and hats. The overall tone is serious and focused on social justice.

IT'S A PRIVILEGE  
TO EDUCATE YOURSELF  
ABOUT RACISM  
INSTEAD OF  
EXPERIENCING IT!!!

# Black lives indeed matter

*James Eades on Unsplash*

## **Oyin Oladipo reflects on the issues of race and racism, and possible ways forward, from the perspective of a black ordinand.**

Every day as I wake up, I behold the glory of the Lord. Each time I step out of my room, I carry it with me. It does not fill my college with dazzling lights; neither does it leave a trail of glory on Oxford's streets. It is contained in a vessel of flesh, often seen as insufficient, incapable. Society has not always been fair to it, yet it is God's masterpiece. Every day as I wake up, I look in the mirror, and I see a black man – a man made in God's image.

### **Ain't nothing wrong with this colour!**

'Black' is a label that I wear as a dark-skinned, non-Caucasian individual. It is not just a word to differentiate me from a light-skinned person; it is like a branding of sorts used to define all there is about me. This label carries the burdens of years of historical oppression and, in contemporary times, the weight of prejudice, of indirect repression.

However, the Bible presents a different perspective about me, about all of humanity, regardless of ethnicity or skin tone. We are all made in the Image of God. 'Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness."' Genesis 1:26.

We are his masterpiece, his representatives on the earth. I can safely say that my 'blackness' (devoid of the stigma that society attaches to it) stems from God, as do the physical features of my white friends. We are all from the same

source. We know that God is Spirit. He is not subject to the physical characteristics that define humans as race, ethnicities, gender etc. From him stems our different skin hues and ethnicities. It follows then, that any individual or system that discriminates against anyone because of their ethnicity or race is sinning against God. Racism is first a sin issue before it becomes a socio-cultural issue.

The sovereign God ordered it that I should come to this world through the agency of Oladipo and Victoria, two black Nigerian people with no known non-black ancestry. I could not have turned out in any other colour. I am a result of divine prerogative, a brown-skinned, woolly haired, brown-eyed male with a flat nose and an African accent. God made me this way, and he is glorified when I live life to the fullest as a black man.

We have seen from Genesis 1 that God made one human race. Race is a human construct, not a divine institution. However, the sad reality remains that coloured people bear the brunt of suffering and injustices in our world. A fact brought about by years of exploitation from those 'who hold the guns, who hold the power, hold the wealth, who hold the Bible'.<sup>1</sup>

### **The law, George Floyd and the Church**

One could argue that attitudes are gradually changing. In the UK, for example, the Equality Act 2010 makes it illegal to discriminate against anyone at work because of specific characteristics, including race. The racially or religiously aggravated offences under the

Crime and Disorder Act 1998, make racism a crime punishable under the law. Nevertheless, there continue to be instances of open and passive racist incidents in UK society, and sadly, even in the Church of England.

After the horrendous killing of George Floyd, by white Police Officer Derek Chauvin and the subsequent protests, many in the Church were quick to jump on the 'black lives matter' bandwagon (in support of the demonstrations and the clamour against racism, rather than the official BLM movement, which remains contentious.). It was, for a moment, a relief to see white leaders taking the knee in an open show of solidarity with black people.

In my Oxford bubble, it was as if white friends suddenly awoke from a deep slumber: 'I never knew you felt that way', 'I am so sorry that you experienced that'. I had face-to-face conversations about racism with about 20 white seminarians and church interns on Zoom, in person, and in a group. It was tiring, but I, alongside other black people with some voice, knew that it was a Kairos moment not to miss. The world was listening; the Church was listening; we had to endure our raw pain and speak out.

The Archbishop of Canterbury reiterated that there is systemic racism in the Church of England. The House of Bishops voted to back the creation of the Archbishops' Racism Action Commission to commence operation in 2021. A welcome development for many, yet to others, another series of noise-making in a space filled with just that, mainly noise.



## Prayer Diary: October – November

- 29** Hailsham, St Mary (Chichester) – Vicar, David Bourne. Give thanks for God's kindness, for the rapid learning of technology and new ways of working, and for a now steady return to face-to-face meeting. Please pray for us moving to two morning services, for ways to resume more outreach activities, and for addressing the challenges of Christmas.
- 30** Halliwell, St Paul (Manchester) – Team Rector, Stephen Tranter. Pray for the new youth & children's worker, and curate who have recently joined our ministry team. Pray that they will give us new fruitfulness among children and families, and minority ethnic members of our community.
- 31** Thank God on this Reformation Day for the courage, convictions, and clarity of the English Reformers of the 16th century. Pray also for Lee Gatiss speaking for a men's group in Santiago, Chile.

### November

- 1** Pray for Lee Gatiss's writing ministry, that his books and articles would be edifying and useful to the church.
- 2** Harborne, St John the Baptist (Birmingham) – Vicar, Leonard Browne. Give thanks for God's sustenance and numerous gospel opportunities during the pandemic; and progress on, and funding for, our building project. Pray for equipping for evangelism through our autumn sermon and small group series; and for best use of premises in the future.

*As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.*  
Psalm 103:12

- 3** Pray for clergy who face opposition and difficulty in their parish, and from the wider church, to remain faithful.
- 4** Hartford, St John (Chester) – Vicar, Mike Smith. Please pray for us as we seek to appoint a new Associate Vicar and Youth Worker, and for wisdom and grace in returning to church and seeking new ways to be and make disciples of Jesus Christ in these troubled times.

***Any individual or system that discriminates against anyone because of their ethnicity or race is sinning against God. Racism is first a sin issue before it becomes a socio-cultural issue.***

Reports have been produced by bodies such as CEMEAC (Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns), AMEN (Anglican Minority Ethnic Network) and other bodies that speak up for BAME people in the Church of England, but little progress has been made. In the long chain of changes that the Church needs to enact, race issues seem to take the backstage.

If black lives indeed matter, if black people are made in God's image, the Church should put her money where her mouth is, put structures in place to stop *all forms* of racism in her midst, and do so as a matter of urgency! This is a gospel, as well as a life and death issue!

### **What is the way forward?**

'What should we do?' was a question that many in an evangelical group I belong to on Facebook asked after I wrote about what I perceived as the silence of white evangelicals in the days following the killing of George Floyd. In London earlier this month, a white evangelical leader posed the same question to me in a slightly different way, 'Oyin, if you could tell me one thing about what evangelicals can do about race and racism, what would it be?' I see the genuineness of white evangelicals to stop this sin in the Church. What solutions would I propose? It is a big question, but I will recommend the following solutions.

#### **On a personal level:**

- Recognise racism in all its forms as what it is, a sin.
- Look deeply into ourselves to identify where this sin is at work in our lives. This sin manifests itself in the form of assumptions about people of colour, innate prejudice,

subconscious bias, and other kinds of direct racist behaviours.

- Go out of your way to make friends with someone from another culture outside the Church. People of colour are longing to be seen, to be known, to be heard! Be gentle with us if we are shy. Years of enduring prejudice has taught us to read the smile of a white person with suspicion. But deep within that hard exterior is a soul that wants to be known. Reach out with the love of Christ.
- White people should reach out to people of colour in churches and *listen actively* to them to know their stories. Black people usually feel invisible in white spaces. Do not interrupt me to tell me that you spent a summer in Uganda, listen to my story.

#### **Corporately as a Church**

- Be proactive in identifying black people with leadership abilities and nurture them.
- Acknowledge and welcome the unique perspective that ethnic minority leaders will bring to the table. Do not expect them to be white in their approach and do not try to whitewash them.
- Black people do not want to be the token BAME leader. We want to be recognised and given opportunities on merit.
- Keep the vision of Revelation 7:9 in view and be guided by it. The Church of Christ is his body, multiethnic and multicultural. Let us open our hearts to welcome everyone regardless of their race.

#### **A final plea!**

The pain of racial injustice is real. Black people

experience active and passive racism every day. We experience it from extreme right-wingers who will see us annihilated, to the unassuming bloke who harbours certain stereotypes. We experience it in the systems and structures of society (and the Church!) that consider whiteness the norm and are institutionally biased against people who do not fit into the white classification.

The voices of the oppressed continue to call out to God! His ears are not inattentive to the cry of the blood of Stephen Lawrence, Christopher Alaneme and many other victims of the racial killings across our nation. God is concerned about the West Indian family in Manchester's Moorside, who are afraid that the racial profiling their teenage son continues to suffer in the hands of the police might drive him over the edge. God sees the fears of the Somali Muslim girl who daily gets called names because of her ethnicity and religion. God hears the cry of the many black people whose mental health is among the worst of all ethnicities in the UK. God hears the cries of all the minorities in this nation.

The words of Jesus still ring true: 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.' (Matthew 25:40).

What will your response be?



Oyin Oladipo is an ordinand at Wycliffe Hall.

1 From the poem 'I Cannot Breathe' by Oyinlade Oladipo.

## Prayer Diary: November

- 5 Pray for AMiE in its work of promoting gospel growth.
  - 6 Hemswell (Lincoln) – P-in-C, Mark Briscoe.
  - 7 Pray for wise administration and use of the funds and properties entrusted to Church Society for gospel work.
  - 8 Henham (Chelmsford) – Vicar, Gary Townsend. Please pray for the Lord to bless all those who have taken from the church porch and village shop copies of Prof. John Lennox's *Where is God in a Coronavirus World?*, as well as other tracts and Gospels.
  - 9 Holborn Queen Square (London) – Curate, James Haith.
  - 10 Hoo St Mary (Rochester) – Vicar, Stephen Gwilt.
  - 11 Pray for Ros Clarke speaking today to Deanery Chapters in Stoke and surrounding areas about teaching Mark's gospel. Pray also for Lee Gatiss attending the Bishop of Maidstone's advisory group.
- The heart of man plans his way,  
but the Lord establishes his steps.  
Proverbs 16:9*
- 12 Pray for the Church Society Finance Committee meeting today. Pray for wise stewardship of our resources, and for Mark Cawson as Chairman.
  - 13 Pray for the ministry of readers and the responsibilities of churchwardens and members of PCCs.
  - 14 Hurworth (Durham) – P-in-C, Adrian Thorp.
  - 15 Pray for evangelical witness in theological colleges and university departments of theology.
  - 16 Kencot (Oxford) – Rector, Harry MacInnes.
  - 17 Pray for the ministry of Church Society Trust, our patronage board meeting today, for wise appointments in all our Trust parishes.



## Densel and Marcia Davy: an interview

**Martin Davy introduces his parents, Densel and Marcia, and asks them about their experiences as black people growing up in the UK after their arrival from Jamaica.**

Galatians 3:26 reminds us that '...in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.'

All are equal at the cross of Christ. And yet there is a danger that while our churches do believe this wonderful truth, its application in our welcome of the nations is lacking. There is a danger of welcoming the nations, but only on our terms, with our cultural bent and not seeing the beauty of the nations as something in its fullness to be welcomed inside our own churches.

My parents, Densel and Marcia Davy, arrived in the UK from Jamaica in the late 1950s and 1960s. As the Nina Simone song starts, they were young, gifted and black. They were able to settle in the British way of life with relative ease – engaging well in school, eventually going to university and becoming a primary school teacher, in my mother's case, and a civil engineer in my father's case. In their early 20s they grew into core members of their local parish church – they served in Sunday clubs and Pathfinders, they were willing and able to join the various rotas we know exist in church

life. Now in their mid-60s they are as involved as ever in church life – my dad was licensed as a lay Reader following his retirement and my mum continues in the various roles and service she has become known for.

To look at them, alongside their three children, is to see a black family fully integrated into a society that a generation ago was totally foreign and not as welcoming as it should have been. In fact, to look at us is to see a family of believers, within which are a few convicted Anglicans who have remained committed to the Church of England.

What follows below are snippets from an interview I had with my parents about their experiences as black people growing up in the UK and particularly in the Anglican Church. This comes with a deliberate scarcity of comment from me. My intention is for us to hear this experience for what it is, a living example of black Caribbean experiences within the church. My prayer is that it will encourage us to contemplate carefully where we may have existing blind spots that need to be prayed through and addressed. It is just a glimpse and while this comes from just two people, I would suggest that the experience is not as uncommon as one might think.

**Martin: Thank you for agreeing to this interview. I want to start by asking you both about your early memories of church back in Jamaica.**

**Densel:** My lasting memory as a young child is how much I loved going to church in Jamaica.



I remember one Sunday my grandmother, who I lived with at the time, was ill so we couldn't go. But I wanted so much to go I remember crying and getting the iron out to iron my trousers. It was a happy place. But it was also at church I remember clearly being taught that Christ died for my sins. I didn't understand it then because, to my knowledge, I had never sinned. It was in my adolescent years that the truth of that started to make any sense to me.

**Marcia:** In my early days in Jamaica I remember Sundays were very special. We looked forward to Sunday... to hearing the church bells and knowing that was the time we set out for church dressed in our best. During the time at church we looked forward to reciting parts of the Bible that we learned from the Sunday before. We looked forward to reading the Bible in church. So it was a very special day for the whole family because the whole family would set out altogether. I also remember that in Jamaica church was where you also felt safe.

**Martin:** You both came to the UK, mum only five years old and dad in your late childhood. How did you find the experience of church?

**Densel:** when I came to England my church attendance was not as good as it was in Jamaica. I went to a Baptist church but only infrequently and then I stopped going until I met Marcia in the mid-70s. So, for almost a decade church attendance was not as good.

However, my grandmother attended but not as regularly. My grandfather did not attend church at all. When he arrived in the UK in

## Prayer Diary: November

- 18** Kingham with Daylesford, Churchill & Sarsden (Oxford) – Team Vicar, David Salter.
  - 19** Pray for evangelicals to be well engaged in the synods and committees of the Church of England, for the sake of the gospel.
  - 20** Knodishall w. Buxlow\* (St Eds & Ips) – P-in-C, Mark Lowther.
  - 21** Pray for the Government, and Christians in Parliament.
  - 22** Lightbowne Evangelical Church, Manchester.
  - 23** Pray for churches with close links to schools, that they may be effective in presenting the Christian faith clearly.
  - 24** Lindfield, All Saints (Chichester) – Pray for Lindfield about to go into vacancy on the retirement of Vicar James Clarke. Pray for Churchwardens and PCC in drawing up the Parish profile. Pray for a continuing and strengthening of gospel ministry through the new appointment.'
  - 25** Pray that the bishops and clergy in the Church of England would uphold biblical teaching on human sexuality.
- Set your minds on things that are above,  
not on things that are on earth.  
Colossians 3:2.*
- 26** Lydford-on-Fosse (Bath & Wells) – Vacancy.
  - 27** Pray for gospel opportunities in Church of England schools over the Christmas period.
  - 28** Manningford Bruce & Abbots (Salisbury) – Team Rector, Deborah Larkey.
  - 29** Advent Sunday. Give thanks for Christ's incarnation and for all that he has done for his people.
  - 30** Pray for those over the Christmas season who don't usually go to church but attend carol services, that they will hear the gospel and respond.

*I keep hearing the term 'unconscious bias' instead of 'racism', but the structures in the Church of England are such that they preclude BAME people flourishing in ministry.*



the 1950s he went to church and he wasn't made to feel welcome at all. He experienced racism to the extent that he never went back to that church. It hurt him so acutely that he never attended church again apart from special occasions like baptisms or weddings.

**Marcia:** When I arrived in England I was young, five or six. I remember being very happy in the Sunday school. A few years later a friend of mine was welcomed into the choir at a Church of England church and she told me about it and I joined the choir. We both had good experience because we were two of the more younger ones and they desperately needed younger members of the church and so we joined the choir and were welcomed.

However, the older people had quite different experiences. The local Baptist church was more welcoming to black people and so most ended up at Baptist churches. We had a CofE church right on the corner of our street and I think we went there just once.

**Martin:** And yet you both have ended up as core members of a Church of England church. Tell me how that happened.

**Marcia:** I joined the choir, as I said, and then, long story short, your dad started coming along and we never left. We, as a family, have always been in that church. We were members even before the current church building was built (it started out in a school) and so we were and are accepted, not least because a lot of people who came to that church saw us there right from the beginning. We were married in that church, our children were born and grew

up in that church, so we were accepted more than if we had joined later.

**Densel:** Yes, when you were there you were accepted and went up there and read the Bible and joined the choir, but there were certain people who weren't allowed to... they just weren't welcomed.

**Martin:** Why do you think that was?

**Densel:** The church didn't reflect the area. I was once told by an archdeacon that he saw we were a middle-class church, which was far from complimentary since our church is in a poorer area of Nottingham among housing estates. We were being a very exclusive church. There was a way to do things and because your mum and I came with particular skill-sets we immediately had a place, both in worship settings and the PCC.

**Marcia:** One previous vicar was a perfectionist. Lovely and brilliant in many ways, but as a black person we were limited in what we were allowed to do publicly. I remember he had a problem with my accent. I remember him mentioning my accent so often that the focus was not how I could contribute in church life, it was too focused on my accent.

**Martin:** But things changed?

**Densel:** It is significant how much the vicar drives the agenda here. Subsequent vicars, including our current vicar, made everyone feel like they can serve and get involved in ministry. They recognise for people to see others like them involved in church life helps us all to feel and live out the truth of being a church family

in Christ. They respect different cultures, and want to see them reflected in the church. They recognise that not everyone had equal access to education and yet welcomed people to read and pray in church, even with imperfect reading. And it is clear in their sermon preparations they are thinking about how they can include everyone... no fancy words for show!

**Martin: Thank you. Have you any final thoughts?**

**Densel:** As far as I know, I'm the only black male licensed Reader in the diocese. I know of one black minister but retired. I keep hearing the term 'unconscious bias' instead of 'racism', but the structures in the Church of England are such that they preclude BAME people flourishing in ministry. The Church of England needs to fully acknowledge there's a real problem.

**Marcia:** Yes, one thing that's been bothering me is use of the phrase 'unconscious bias' rather than 'racism'. It is true we all have unconscious bias, but that's not the point. We cannot address racism if we don't call it out for what it is.



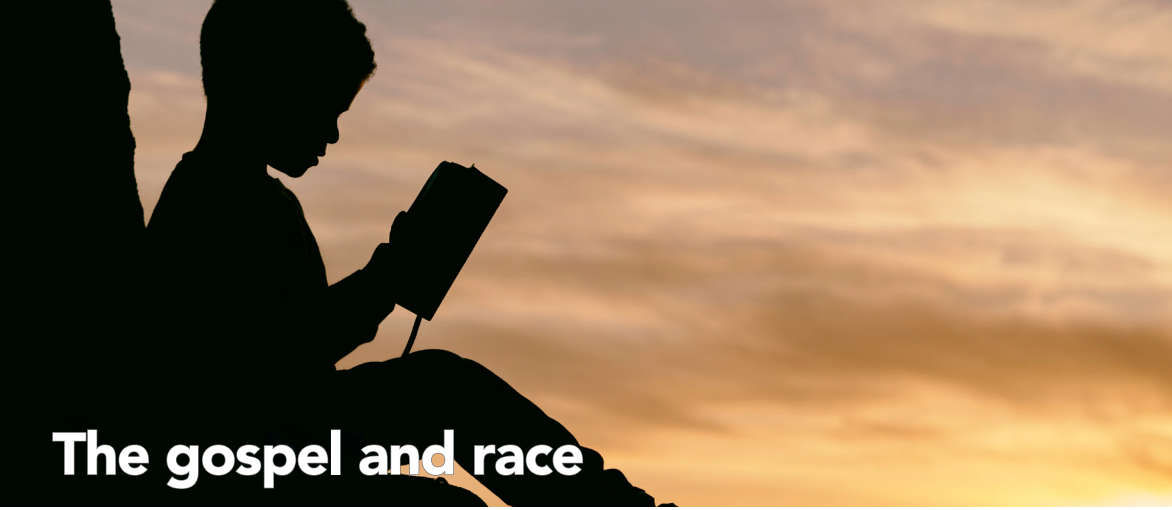
*Martin Davy is Rector of Holy Trinity Church, Theale.*

## Prayer Diary: December

- 1 Mayfield (Lichfield) – Vicar, Brian Leathers.
- 2 Pray for greater evangelical witness in our cathedrals over the Christmas period.
- 3 Meysey Hampton (Gloucester) – Team Rector, John Swanton.
- 4 Pray for the Anglican Primates, that they would be faithful to the Scriptures under the pressures they face.
- 5 Moulton (Peterborough) – Vicar, Andy Byfield. Please give thanks for new staff members: Nick Alexander (Associate Vicar), Nic Edwards (Curate) and Pete Brown (Youth Worker), and pray for them as they settle into their new roles. Please pray for pastoral care of the church family during this time of Covid, and also continued outreach into our community during this time of restrictions.
- 6 Pray for retired clergy and their families, and for continued ministry opportunities.

*Speaking the truth in love,  
we are to grow up in every way into him  
who is the head, into Christ.  
Ephesians 4:15.*

- 7 Mursley (Oxford) – Rector, Simon Faulks.
- 8 Pray today for new students to sign up for Priscilla modules starting in January.
- 9 Pray for Luckley House School, in Wokingham, for which Church Society appoints trustees.
- 10 Norwich (St Andrew) – Vicar, Martin Young.
- 11 Pray for those in prison and for prison chaplains and others engaged in Christian witness in this field.
- 12 Old Hill, Holy Trinity (Worcester) – Vicar, Nick Gowers. Please earnestly pray Ephesians 3:16–21 for us. Oh, how we need it! Also, please pray we would make the most of this sovereignly ordained Covid season, both to reach out and renew and refresh what we do as a church.



# The gospel and race

Aaron Burden on Unsplash

## **Ro Mody examines systemic racism in the Bible and in the Church, and suggests action points for conservative evangelical Anglicans.**

The world has been shocked by the horrifying events in the USA in June concerning the death of George Floyd. The widespread protests which followed meant that the issue of racism came to the top of the political agenda, not merely in the USA but also in the UK and elsewhere. While the politics surrounding the issue of race is important, as Christians we need to examine the issue of race from the perspective of Scripture and also consider the experience of black and ethnic minority Christians in our churches.

### **Systemic racism in the Bible**

The Bible begins with all humanity being created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:26–27; Psalm 8). This act of creation establishes that humanity is one and equal, as Paul proclaims in Acts 17:25–26: '[God] himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth.' All nations (and hence races) are equal and there is no place for racism in God's creational purposes.

One of the results of the fall was that our relationships with other human beings are corrupted (Genesis 3:1–19). But while we recognise our individual sinful actions, including personal racism, the Bible also views sin in corporate and systemic terms. All human

beings are implicated in Adam's sin, 'for in Adam, all die' (1 Corinthians 15:22 cf. Romans 5:12–21). This corporate kind of sin is evident in Revelation 13–14, where the two beasts are the evil political and religious systems of Rome (and indeed all other worldly powers) that cruelly oppress Christians. Further, Paul talks about powers, principalities, and authorities (see Ephesians 1:21; Colossians 1:16; 2:15) that are supernatural, yet influence worldly systems which tyrannise and deceive (Colossians 2:8.). Given the Bible's doctrine of systemic sin, one can conclude that racism too has a systemic dimension.

We need to define 'systemic racism' carefully. It is *not* that everyone is intentionally or consciously, overtly racist, nor that everyone believes that BAME people are essentially inferior or subhuman compared to white people. Rather, 'systemic racism' occurs when there is a general, subtle, assumed, unmotivated bias, and a covert, coded, basic assumption of some corporate entities. This assumption is that there is not a broad 'fit' between the culture and identity of an organisation and the culture and identity of another racial group. There is a preference – a comfortable preference – for those who are alike, for those who belong to the majority culture. Those who do not fit in with the culture of the majority racial group or organisation are considered 'other' and so are excluded in a variety of ways.

The most famous victim of systemic racism in the Bible is Jesus Christ. Jesus was

***'Systemic racism' occurs when there is a general, subtle, assumed, unmotivated bias, and a covert, coded, basic assumption of some corporate entities.***

executed by Pontius Pilate (Mark 15:12) and the Roman authorities, which were systemically anti-Semitic. When the Roman soldiers mock, curse, strike, and flog Jesus as the 'King of the Jews', and when the inscription above his head mockingly asserts Rome's dismissal of Jewish Messianic hopes: 'The King of the Jews', we see how their anti-Semitism led to his execution (Mark 15:12,18,26). Jesus himself, by contrast, went out of his way to break down racial barriers by talking, as a Jewish man, to a Samaritan woman in John 4.

While the Bible thus recognises the sin of racism, and the reality of systemic racism, we should also celebrate the anti-racist doctrine implicit in the gospel. For Paul, one crucial implication of the doctrine of justification by faith alone was that no longer was it necessary to become a Jew to belong to the people of God (Galatians 2:11–21). He sets down an anti-racism doctrine for the church by proclaiming that in the church, race and culture ought to be irrelevant: 'there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and in all' (Colossians 3:11). What makes the church one is not racial distinctives, but the presence of Christ. This is what we will see in heaven, a place of all races, equally redeemed by the Lamb (Revelation 7:9).

### **Systemic racism in the Church**

I have faced this type of covert systemic racism in the Church of England. Examples of this covert racism are as follows:

- A DDO asked me about my experience of

the Church of England when I was young. Of course, I could not show any experience since I was born in India to a Parsee Zoroastrian family.

- A Bishop told me that I ought not to make anything of my background in applying for jobs in the CofE; I think he was trying to be helpful, rather than explicitly racist.
- Another Bishop told me, after failing to get a position as vicar in an English country village, that 'your gifts deserve a wider context than an English village.'
- Said to me: 'My daughter said that you look just like our previous vicar' (said by someone in church leadership, their previous vicar was Indian).
- Said to me: 'You are from India, aren't you?' (in the context of a leadership business meeting).
- Said to me: 'You weren't born here, were you?' (in the context of a pastoral phone call).
- Said to me: 'you are from India' (in the context of a meeting with a senior church leader).
- Said to a Nigerian church member: 'They let your black face into our church!' (justified as merely a joke).
- Further, one person reported to me that a senior church figure had told him that there was a story that after the Second World War, the Jews wanted to poison Germany's water supply in revenge for the Holocaust. I do not believe that this person realised that he was merely recycling an old anti-Semitic trope.

*While many British missionaries sacrificed their lives for the sake of the salvation of the people of the colonies, the assumption persists that British culture is superior.*

I felt powerless to respond to the above examples because they would have been dismissed as mere feelings, and because the culture was so influential. The people involved in these incidents may not even recall these statements (but for a BAME clergyman they were noted and remembered clearly), yet that is the problem; their words were casual and not thought about, but they reveal a possible general culture of systemic racism in the church. Racism is different from being attacked for other individual distinctives or quirks. There is a sense when I am excluded that it is a corporate issue stemming from an underlying assumption that white British (church) culture is superior to Indian culture. This assumption has its roots in the complex legacy of British colonialism. While many British missionaries sacrificed their lives for the sake of the salvation of the people of the colonies, the assumption persists that British culture is superior to that of the former colonies. A whole race is being written off.

The impact of systemic racism within the church is discrimination against BAME people within the church in terms of incumbencies, senior posts, theological colleges, synods, para-church organisations, speakers at conferences, and lay leadership. The statistics are clear. And all of this, along with the underlying assumption, has a negative effect on our evangelism among non-white people.

### **What must conservative evangelical Anglicans do?**

- 1 Understand, investigate, and realise the seriousness of systemic racism in the church. I know that many white evangelicals do not believe that systemic racism is an issue

because they themselves are not racist, nor have they ever seen racism in our churches. But white evangelicals need to listen to the experiences of BAME evangelicals.

- 2 Acknowledge the failures and sins of systemic racism in the general culture of the church, confessing to the Lord, and seeking forgiveness and reconciliation.
- 3 Work to institute a Church of England policy of anti-systemic racism for the church, so that future BAME members of the church are treated in a Christian way, and to encourage, preach and to teach on the Bible's anti-racist theology. This must include giving equal opportunities to BAME Christians applying for posts within the church.

After all, in the end, we are all united to Christ, we belong to one another:

'For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.'

Ephesians 2:14–16.



Ro Mody is New Testament lecturer at ETCAsia, Singapore.



# The (united) kingdom of God is like...

[thevisualsyouneed/123rd.com](http://thevisualsyouneed/123rd.com)

## **Foluso Enwerem makes a powerful case for godly sorrow and action to address a culture of racism within the Church of England.**

A curacy in the Church of England can bring many joys, and unexpected challenges. For a black curate starting his curacy in the West Midlands a few years ago, challenge came in the form of a question from a white parishioner who, upon seeing the curate's clerical collar, asked: 'Are you a proper priest?' When the curate, somewhat bemused, answered 'No, I'm a priest in training', the man followed up with 'Are you a *proper* priest in training?' Despite the evidence, this black curate would regularly find himself assumed to be the pastor of a black majority church. People found it easy to see him as a minister in other churches – *but a vicar in the Church of England?* For these white parishioners, black, Church of England and Clergy could *not* go together.

## **Racism – a reality check and some definitions**

Since 1983, the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE) has advanced the definition of institutional racism as:

'... a range of long-established systems, practices and procedures which have the effect, if not the intention, of depriving ethnic minority groups of equality of opportunity and access to society's resources. It operates through the normal workings of the system rather than the conscious intent of the prejudiced individual.'

In December 2019, Gus John, a former consultant to the Church of England on the

Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns (CMEAC), resigned over the Church's 'woeful' record over the past 30 years in combating racism. In February this year, at General Synod, Archbishop Justin Welby was reminded of the failure of white Anglicans in previous decades to welcome black Anglican Christians into their parish churches; he was also challenged about the Church's present-day lack of solidarity in the current 'Windrush Scandal'. In response, Archbishop Welby admitted that 'the Church of England is *still* deeply institutionally racist.'

Dealing with racism by simply targeting individuals as 'bad apples' will not address failures which are embedded at an institutional, systemic level – neither will treating 'the institution' as though it were an impersonal entity, as if any institution can be distinct from the individuals who work and act within it.

## **The (united) kingdom of God?**

Racism in UK society has long, deep roots that spread back centuries via the British Empire, colonialism and the transatlantic slave trade. The history of the UK as one of the most significant empires of recent times has left an ongoing legacy of racism and anti-blackness that is still very much with us in the present, in a myriad of covert, 'respectable' forms. Overt racism has also experienced a renaissance as increasingly hostile anti-immigration rhetoric and policies have once again become a normalised part of the political landscape.

The Church of England itself played a complex and complicit role within the British Empire. The thinking and theology that gave us Christendom, and which also gave rise to the United Kingdom's self-understanding as 'a Christian nation', still exercises a powerful sway over British society. Indeed, present-day lament over the loss of Christian values stems partly from the assumption that, until relatively recently, the UK had long been upholding essential kingdom of God values. Yet even in the present day, a form that candidates must complete as part of the process of discerning a call to ordained ministry, requires candidates to confirm that they are *not* a member of the British National Party (BNP). In effect, in 2020 the Church still has to remind candidates that ordained ministry in the Church of England is *not* compatible with membership of a political party with an exclusionist nationalistic agenda.

### **The kingdom of God is like...**

Jesus, often through parables, and always through his life's example, teaches us that the kingdom of God is about who God is; it is deeply and inherently founded in love, justice, peace and joy – we are to love and value other people deeply, including the 'alien and stranger' in our midst. The vision of the heavenly kingdom that Revelation presents us with is a glorious vision of people of every tongue, tribe and nation worshipping the Lamb together. One of the Five Marks of Mission in the Church of England is a commitment 'To transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and pursue peace and reconciliation'. We routinely pray 'Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven.'

And yet our embrace of the good news of the kingdom here on earth in the United Kingdom all too often finds it easy to accommodate xenophobia and racism, both overt and implicit. Within the Church of England – a church originally conceived of as a

church of and for *all* the English people – there still remains a powerful, underlying culture that sends the message that people who are white English are 'rightfully in' and the Church should be preserved and perpetuated in their image. In his very timely and insightful book, *Ghost Ship: Institutional Racism and the Church of England*, Azariah France-Williams refers to this merging and blurring of Christianity and nationalistic notions as 'The Cross and the Crown (Club).' Christians who find themselves classified as 'non-white' – including those Christians whom God has clearly called to serve as an integral part of the Church of England – are treated as 'resident alien others', eligible only for partial, conditional participation.

Despite the centuries of evidence of the violence that racism does in *all* its forms, in the Church, racism is conveniently relegated to the category of an unfortunate, but inevitable, social problem. The fact that it took something as extreme as the brutal public killing of George Floyd for many in our country to be shaken awake to the deadly reality of racism is telling of how too many people are used to ignoring and minimising the violence of long-entrenched racism.

The kingdom of God that Jesus taught and lived out recognises racism as a sin that demands a deeply theological response because it constitutes an attack on the Creator God who chose to create *all* humanity in God's image, in *glorious diversity*. The popular 'colour-blind' approach to race is *not* a solution; the racism in our systems, structures and institutions *needs* to be seen to be addressed.

### **Godly sorrow leading to action**

Telling a more truthful 'warts and all' version of British history – without defensiveness or debilitating guilt, but *with* the inclusion of the perspectives of those whose heritage lies in the former colonies, would enable us to see more clearly *together* and so recognise the racist systems and assumptions that have been

ingrained into the institutions of our society. For the Church of England, this would need us to be honest in a way which allows for the 'godly sorrow' of which Paul speaks (2 Corinthians 7:8–11a). Godly sorrow brings *repentance* – it is life-giving and embraces justice – and is demonstrated in thought and word and *deed*.

In an open letter to the Archbishops of York and Canterbury in June 2020, the Anglican Minority Ethnic Network (AMEN) emphasised the need for *transformative action now*. With all that is currently happening in our world, with the renewed and *new* cry for racial justice, could this be a *kairos* moment – a prophetic time for 'anyone who has an ear to listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches'?

As disciples of Jesus, we are called to be not mere hearers of the word, nor just *proclaimers* of the word, but *doers* of the word. In Jesus' vision of the kingdom, the thief is no longer given free rein to use racism to steal, kill and destroy in the body of Christ. As Christians, to be true to the gospel means that it is Jesus' kingdom values, and Jesus' vision of life in its fullness for *all*, that has to reign in his Church – including the Church of England.

### For further information

- *Ghost Ship: Institutional Racism and the Church of England*, A. D. A. France-Williams, (London: SCM Press, 2020)
- *Black Theology*, Anthony G. Reddie, (London: SCM Press, 2012)
- *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People About Race*, Reni Eddo-Lodge (London: Bloomsbury, 2018)
- [amenanglican.org.uk/](http://amenanglican.org.uk/)



*Foluso Enwerem is curate of Top Church (aka St Thomas's and St Luke's), Dudley in the diocese of Worcester.*

## Prayer Diary: December

- 13 Pray for the work of Affinity in connecting evangelicals across denominations in the UK.
  - 14 Ongar with Norton Mandeville (Chelmsford) – P-in-C, Stewart Gibbs. We have enjoyed a deepening fellowship between the three churches during lockdown, sharing Bible Studies, Fellowship Groups and Sunday Worship on Zoom. Do pray that this would continue into the future. Please also pray for our adapted plans for a Christmas Event and Lights Switching On in our community this year, as this proved very popular last year.
  - 15 Pray for the ministry of Church Society Trust, our patronage board meeting today, for wise appointments in all our Trust parishes.
  - 16 Oulton (Norwich) – Team Rector, Helen Jary.
  - 17 Pray for *The Global Anglican* editorial Board meeting today – for excellent resources to be produced; Peter Jensen as Editor, and Andrew Atherstone as Chairman.
  - 18 Pray for the Latimer Trust and its publications ministry.
- The LORD is my chosen portion and my cup;  
you hold my lot.*  
Psalm 16:5
- 19 Pangbourne with Tidmarsh & Sulham (Oxford) – Vacancy.
  - 20 Pray that evangelical witness may not be lost in church groupings of mixed churchmanship.
  - 21 Parham with Hacheston (St Eds & Ips) – P-in-C, Graham Hedger. Covid has given us new opportunities for digital church and new members. We need wisdom how to build on this alongside inherited church and to continue to grow new leaders.



## Meeting racism with grace

Alex Motoc on Unsplash

**Anael Appadoo shares a significant personal experience as a 'mixed-race' teenager, and looks forward to life in the new creation.**

If you met me you would likely mistake me for a white middle-class man with all the associated privileges. But you'd be mistaken.

As I thought how best to describe my ethnicity, I initially wrote, 'I am a mulatto' (being a keen Nirvana fan as a teen), but a quick search ruled that one out for being racist and wrong. So I wrote, 'I'm half-caste' (the hairs on the back of your neck might now be raised), but again, came to understand that this term, too, was racist. And herein lies the problem I want to address: that what is perceived as racism may reflect only genuine naivety or curiosity, but that some in the church have become graceless and intolerant in response.

So, let me start again, I am 'mixed-race'. My mother is white-British (do I say 'British' or 'English'?) and my father is Indo-Mauritian. Incidentally, I should add that my parents are both working class and I did not receive a university education until being selected to train for ordained ministry in my mid-twenties, after three careers in 'unskilled' industries. When I was younger my skin would go dark brown in the sun, but years of working in a windowless restaurant kitchen quickly saw my pigmentation lighten up. I'm now more often mistaken for being Greek or Turkish than of Indian origins.

### Growing up with racism

Racism was a part of growing up for me. I was

regularly called a 'Paki' (as an insult), beaten up for my dad's skin colour, witnessed my younger brother being assaulted by a 'white supremacist', and my sister was ashamed to go to school because her clothes 'smelt like a curry-house'. My own name was the source of much amusement, as a few changes in the letters made for a great insult which I could not easily get rid of. My friends who were raised in predominantly Indian communities are regularly stopped by police for driving 'nice' cars, or treated suspiciously when wearing their hood up, not to mention the visceral fear they sense from people when they walk around London with a beard and a back-pack.

But one event in my teens changed my perspective dramatically. I remember quite vividly being on the bus home from school when a boy a few years older than me was waiting to get off just behind me. He, rather sheepishly, asked me, 'Are you really a Paki?' I felt so angry that I could not reply. I gave the lad a sad look, and silently walked off the bus. This boy had been one of my most constant bullies, regularly hurling racist slurs at me when among his mates. But here he was, in an uncharacteristic moment of vulnerability, seeking to actually get to understand me better and my response was to shun him. In the weeks following, I became increasingly ashamed of what I had done. He had come to me with an open hand and an enquiring heart, and rather than help him to better understand his failings, I perhaps contributed towards them.

All this is preamble to help me make the

*This article is an invite for us all to reflect on our God-given differences as points for celebration, and to have a posture of grace towards our enquirers (and even our antagonists) rather than one of suspicion.*

point I now intend to focus on. Be forewarned that what follows may feel sharp and rough, perhaps most especially to BAME folk rather than Ws. ('White' people can have a letter, also, can't they?)

### **Where was the grace?**

As I listened to the debates and conversations which flared up in the wake of the murder of George Floyd, I became increasingly frustrated for two reasons. Firstly, quite often racism was being painted with a two-colour palette, as it often is, rather than the breadth of tones that exist. Caricatures of the majority of 'AME' people persist in much mainstream culture and media: Indian characters are still often seen only in corner-shops, wearing turbans, and with thick accents; Chinese people only live in Chinatown and barely speak English (unless imparting ancient pearls of wisdom); Eastern Europeans have unskilled jobs; Irish people are often drunk or violent, and the list goes on. The world is not simply Black and White.

And secondly, because the interviewees who described their experiences of racism often spoke in ways that lacked grace. There was an implicit denial of any bias or sin on the part of the BAME groups they represented.

As the interviews that came through my feed – *from conservative evangelical publishers* – ran on, what I was hearing from the speakers struck me as being equally intolerant and suspicious towards white people. Before you cancel me, or tweet your anger at my cultural insensitivity, do read on. This article is an invite

for us all to reflect on our God-given differences as points for celebration, and to have a posture of grace towards our enquirers (and even our antagonists) rather than one of suspicion.

One of the key comments that was repeated again and again was anger at the question 'Where are you from?', with the implication 'where are you *really* from?' I almost always ask people who 'look' or 'speak' differently to me, 'where are you from?', whether they have darker or lighter skin, and yes, I actually want to know where they are from, that's why I have asked. I am genuinely interested in the richness of what makes them *them*. Often when I ask this of an Indian person, I initially receive a puzzled look, like they are trying to discern the question 'behind' the question. However, when I quickly add my own ethnic makeup, they visibly relax and speak much more openly. Why must I demonstrate my 'otherness' before being granted permission to ask about theirs? Why are such conversations between those of different complexions met with such suspicion?

Perhaps because on the surface it seems an assault to our identity. If we are trying to make a person feel less by making them out to be less 'British', then this is indeed an assault. But I appeal to brothers and sisters in the church, to consider whether the enquiry might be a genuine curiosity for us as a person. If we 'look' different, or 'sound' different or have another mark of 'difference' (such as a name), well, it's because in that respect we are 'different'.

Sometimes this can be hurtful. Sometimes, of course, it may bring up painful memories

of being marginalised, excluded or attacked because of our differences. But let's not assume that our brothers or sisters in the church are asking with such prejudice. Let's try to meet them with grace, patience and forbearance.

I am reminded of Jesus' instructions when Peter asks our Lord, 'How many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me?' (Matthew 18:21–35). How could we, who have received so much grace and mercy, for our atrocious sins and naïve missteps against our Lord, have so little grace to offer a brother or sister who makes a misstep against us in their language, perhaps out of ignorance rather than malice? With grace we should seek to help them understand, otherwise they will continue in their ignorance. In my encounter on the bus, in my pain and anger, I left that young man in his ignorance, and perhaps allowed him to go on to offend against others, when a simple answer, with a warm smile – even to my persecutor – may have helped him along the road of neighbourly love in the future. Jesus, you remember, instructs us to love even our enemies, and to pray for those who persecute us, not to hate them, not to rage against them, not to 'cancel' them.

### **Celebrating differences**

My experience of brothers and sisters in CofE churches have not shown them to be intentionally racist, but I have found many to be naïve or indifferent towards diversity.

How might we cultivate churches which celebrate differences, rather than being indifferent towards them, and that stimulate openness rather than suspicion? Here are a few ideas:

- If you know people from ethnic backgrounds in your church, especially those whose first language is not English, take the time to learn a phrase or two in their language to help greet them. If you are ordained, let me encourage you to learn a short blessing in their language to say in a quiet whisper during communion.
- Invite people to lead our intercessions in a

way that resonates with their own tradition or culture? Let me encourage churches to be brave and gracious, learning to accommodate our ears to different voices, rather than silencing them. I am reminded of a Nigerian grandfather who always began his intercessions by boldly singing a short 'spiritual'.

- Utilise introductory welcomes, liturgies, responses and blessings from other cultures represented in our church family or wider community.
- Allow music to be played in a style that resonates with the minority cultures in our churches, and indeed, play music and sing songs from those cultures.
- Pray regularly in our intercessions for all the cultures and communities represented in our congregation.
- Host regular lunches for communities inside, or outside of, the church family, inviting people from all cultures to contribute.
- Treat each other with grace and love, even when there is ignorance or naivety, mistakes or malice.

As believers, we look forward to the new creation, where every tribe, nation and tongue will gather before the throne of the Lord in praise. I have no idea what that will be like, but in my head it's Korean style prayer, with all tongues boldly singing our Lord's praise in noisy chorus. If our churches today are supposed to provide a window into this final destination, a foretaste of our heavenly reality, my experience of the richness of such diversity has been admittedly lacking. We would be as well to get started now, and perhaps in doing so may sample a sweeter appetiser to that heavenly banquet.



*Anael Appadoo currently serves as Associate Minister at Christ Church Surbiton Hill.*

## Vacancies & appointments

Church Society Trust holds the rights of patronage for a number of benefices in the Church of England. To find out more about the current vacancies, or to apply, please see [churchsociety.org/vacancies](http://churchsociety.org/vacancies).

### Vacancies

P-in-C, St Mary, Wath, Diocese of Leeds  
Vicar, St George, Worthing, Diocese of Chichester

P-in-C, St Mary, Fulham (West Kensington),  
Diocese of London

Chaplain, Gloucester Mariners, Diocese of Gloucester

Vicar, Christ Church, Surbiton Hill, Diocese of Southwark (pictured)

### Appointments

Stuart Gibbs, P-in-C, St Mary, High Ongar,  
Diocese of Chelmsford

Charlotte Lloyd-Evans, P-in-C, St Mary,  
Greenhithe, Diocese of Rochester



## Prayer Diary: December

- 22** Pray for Christian marriages, that they would be focused on Christ and be a testimony to his grace.
- 23** Peldon (Chelmsford) – Vacancy.
- 24** Pray for gospel clarity at midnight services, and for open hearts to respond.
- 25** Christmas Day – for clear gospel presentation at Christmas Day services, for Christians to appreciate afresh God's salvation.
- 26** Pray for churches in the Anglican Communion facing persecution in countries openly hostile to Christianity.
- 27** Pickenham North with Houghton (Norwich) – Rector, Stephen Thorp.

*I am the light of the world.*

*Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.*

John 8:12

- 28** Pray for those with mental health problems and those who care for them.
- 29** Poole, St James (Salisbury) – Rector, Lucy Holt.
- 30** Pray for those who have suffered physically, mentally, and financially over the past year from coronavirus. Pray that they would turn to the Lord during this time.
- 31** Poughill, St Olaf (Truro) – P-in-C, Teresa Folland.

### Thank you for praying with us.

\* Indicates that the Trust's parish is part of a larger benefice.

These prayer diary items are also accessible via the PrayerMate app:

<http://praynow4.org/churchsociety>

We also produce a prayer list sheet of all the parishes we are patron of; if you would like to be sent this please contact the office.

# Crossway

**Autumn 2020/157**

Editor: Ros Clarke

Crossway is the quarterly magazine of Church Society and is available free to members of the Society. For details of how to become a member, please check our website or contact us using the details listed below.

Crossway is also available by annual subscription. Our 2020 rates, which include postage, are:

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## **The Global Anglican**

The launch issue of *The Global Anglican* (previously *Churchman*), an international theological journal produced quarterly by Church Society, is now out:

- Editorial – 'Welcome to *The Global Anglican*: Andrew Atherstone; 'Why I Am Still an Anglican': Peter Jensen
- 'Learning God: A Plea for Principled Theological Education': Mark D. Thompson
- 'Equipping Today's Bishops for Effective Ministry and Mission': Samson M. Mwaluda
- 'The Role of Missionary Bishops in the Growth of the Church of Nigeria': Foreman Nedison
- 'Lingering Shame: An Exploration of Shame, Atonement and the Gospel': Rosalind Clarke
- 'Inter-Church Relationships in Paul's Epistles': James T. Hughes

## **Making a bequest to Church Society**

Here is a convenient form of words which can be used to make a bequest to Church Society in your Will:

'I GIVE the residue of my estate / the sum of \_\_\_\_\_ pounds (£) to CHURCH SOCIETY of Ground Floor, Centre Block, Hille Business Park, 132 St Albans Road, Watford WD24 4AE and I DIRECT that the receipt of the Administrator or other proper officer of Church Society shall be good and sufficient discharge to my Executor.'