
Presentation by Jennie Taylor, Diocesan & Cathedral Racial Justice Officer

Good morning, for those of you who don't know me my name is Jennie Taylor. I have been in post since August 2022 as the Racial Justice officer for Liverpool Diocese.

Over the last 6 months I've been working alongside many different people within the Diocese who have been kind enough to share with me their hopes and dreams for the future. My co-workers; lay, ordained and administrative have helped to shape a strategy for racial justice that will lead us to a place of increased understanding, participation and support for one another.

The racial justice strategy is underpinned by the fourth mark of mission; to seek to transform unjust structures of society, to challenge violence of every kind and to pursue peace and reconciliation. This strategy aims change the culture in this Diocese, our schools and Cathedral so that we become an Anti-Racist Diocese.

One that:

- Educates people to understand what racism is and how it has evolved both within society and in our specific culture
- Empowers people of all ethnicities to become aware of the racist ideas we hold and work to move beyond them
- Evaluates its policies, procedures, behaviours and actions to identify and remove racist practices and support new policies that promote equality for all.

The strategy is a call for us to first audit our policies, our processes and our people management, so that we can understand our current reality and shine a light on those areas of injustice that exist within our own culture. We can then acknowledge the harm of racism in our churches, our schools and our organisation and work to move beyond that harm through repentance and repair. To repair and reconcile relationships we must engage with others both within the church and within our wider society. Through prayer, conversation, education and advocacy we can work together to build a future where every person is valued and can bring their best contribution.

The focus of our engagement will broadly span four areas that we believe will have the largest impact on changing the culture of the Diocese and Cathedral to one which embodies the principles of Anti-Racism.

Vocations and Recruitment

Vocations and recruitment are central to the work of the Church. Those called to serve in ministry both inside the church walls and within our society need to be equipped for that work in an increasingly global society.

Education and Transformation

We know that as a church we have struggled to talk about race and racism. To talk about the reality of our involvement in both the rise in anti-Semitism and the enslavement of Africans as well as our role in emancipation. This is an important acknowledgement of a shared history and the history of racism within the Diocese. When we do not know our history and struggle to speak about it we will continue to have difficulty engaging with populations where that history has had a negative impact and has caused the most harm.

Anti-Slavery Responses through Campaigning and the Triangle of Hope

We hope that as we listen to African heritage communities we can learn how to respond to our own history. We hope together to find ways that demonstrate our commitment to none repetition through our work campaigning and responding to human trafficking, asylum and refugee issues within our communities. As we listen to our members we will learn how the church can become a true ally in the fight against racism and all forms of slavery and racism.

Liverpool Cathedral

Liverpool Cathedral is a permanent part of the communities of L1 and L8, it is Cathedral of the Diocese. It is a place of encounter in the lives of people from all over the world. These multiple points of connection allow the Cathedral to be a space where we can tell the story of our Diocese as we work from repentance to repair.

Some of the work has already begun and as we reflect on it we can be encouraged and empowered to continue our journey of becoming a more racially just church.

It would be remiss of me to talk about racial justice in the Diocese and not congratulate Canon Maggie Swinson on her election as Chair of the Anglican Consultative Council. Maggie's passion for justice and her example of perseverance is an encouragement to me and many others who want to see people of all ethnicities represented and contributing in every area of our shared life.

Over the last few years our vocations team has seen an increase in ordinands and curates from UK ethnic minority backgrounds. We hope that what we have learnt and continue to learn as we support and encourage our ordinands and curates through their formation process will shape how we work to increase participation in other areas.

Some of that learning is already being used as we work with HR and our equality, diversity and inclusion leads to ensure that our recruitment processes are fair and unbiased. We are challenging ourselves to be aware of the additional burden some of our ethnic minority co-workers face, and considering how we can best provide support so that they thrive in our workspaces.

In May 2022 we welcomed a visit from the Archbishops Commission for Racial Justice where we were able to share the work that had begun in the Diocese, particularly the ongoing work around contested heritage buildings and monuments. Later this month the Racial Justice Directorate will be visiting Liverpool to host a networking event for all racial justice leads in the Church of England. We are grateful that we have been able to collaborate with them and the International Slavery Museum and will be ending that day by hosting a commemorative evensong at Liverpool Cathedral for the UN day the elimination of racial discrimination. You are welcome to join us for evensong next Tuesday 21st March at 5:30 in the Lady Chapel.

The work of the Triangle of Hope continues and here in Liverpool we have been able to welcome new members of the Tsedaqah community as they live and serve together. Our youth pilgrimage will continue this year for the first time since covid, gathering young people from Liverpool, Kumasi and Virginia as they learn together, pray together, forge lasting relationships, take part in community service and visit each other's settings. The purpose of the pilgrimage is to nurture personal development and grow and connect young people's faith both to history and today's world. We are looking forward to hearing their stories as they continue on this pilgrimage for the next 3 years.

In 2021 the Triangle of Hope offered an opportunity for Liverpool Diocese to pilot a new programme, the Slavery Truth Project. The aim was to help churches and worshipping congregations with buildings and monuments that commemorated and glorified the slave trade to work to acknowledge those links, to have reconciling conversations and to create an artistic response to what they had learnt about their history, the legacy of racism and their commitment to justice.

Several churches have begun that work including Liverpool Cathedral and my hope is that more churches will take up this opportunity to work together for reconciliation within their parishes.

One of the highlights last autumn was working with Phil Leigh and the team at Christian Aid to collaborate on an event that helped people understand the links between racial justice and climate justice. The Talking Climate justice event brought together Christians from different traditions and denominations to listen together, to engage in the realities of climate injustice which predominately affects those in the global south, the same areas of the world where the damage of racism and colonialism are most felt. We were able to reflect, pray and plan together, each of us making a small pledge, and together those pledges could make a big difference both here in Liverpool Diocese but also to people across the world.

In Acts Chapter 6 we read about a situation that highlights racial injustice in the early church. The church, made up of Hebrews and Greeks was taking care of its widows by providing them with a daily amount of food, as was the custom at the time. A complaint was made that the Greek widows were receiving a smaller ration of food than their Hebrew counterparts.

The leaders of the church did not ignore or defend the action, or suggest that this was simply a misunderstanding. They acted. They gathered together the congregation and chose people from both ethnicities to serve the food. The chose people known for their integrity, people who were wise and full of the Spirit of God to repair the situation.

We can take some encouragement from this story. We are not the first church to struggle with racial injustice or to have that injustice manifest as lack of opportunity, inclusion and belonging. But we should aim to be the last. Like those leaders in the early church, we must take action to rectify those areas of our culture that have allowed racial disparities to go unchecked and unchallenged. We must work together, united in our desire for true repentance and the repair and restoration of relationships. We can do our part and ensure that the generations that come after us will have a church which actively demonstrates that all people are of immeasurable value because they are made in God's image. Thank you.