



The Archbishops' Commission for Racial Justice has released the fourth of its biannual Racial Justice reports.

Mandated to drive 'significant cultural and structural change on issues of racial justice within the Church of England', the Archbishops' Commission for Racial Justice ("ACRJ"), headed by The Rt Hon. Lord Paul Boateng, is charged with monitoring, holding to account and supporting the implementation of the 47 recommendations of the Archbishops' Anti-Racism Taskforce which were laid out in the Taskforce's comprehensive 2021 report, From Lament to Action.

In his foreword letter to the fourth Report, Lord Boateng comments on the good work the Commission has seen in some areas of The Church of England, in particular the continuing focus of the Church Commissioners on restorative justice. He laments the "glacial pace of change" that the Commission and the Racial Justice Unit continue to encounter.

Lord Boateng highlights two main areas of concern: the absence of data and where data does exist, a reluctance to share it; and, within the National Church Institutions and diocesan authorities, he comments on the 'secrecy and opaqueness' of their practices and processes.

Secondly, Lord Boateng calls for the church to embrace an inclusive theology, one which recognises the contribution of diverse origins and diversity in liturgy. He questions whether the Church of England is really willing to meet the challenges of becoming a more inclusive and diverse church and whether it is best positioned for its professed mission.

The Report itself is structured in two parts, the first "Assessing Progress", provides commentary on the uneven progress in meeting the action points of From Lament to Action [page 14] and on the very mixed picture of responses to questionnaires from Cathedrals and dioceses [page 21].

In the second part "Good News from Around the Church", the Report focuses on the examples of good practice and other good news from across and beyond the Church of England.

Students at Emmanuel Theological College

While the overall picture, as described in the previous part, is very uneven, the Commissioners have encountered many signs of encouragement and inspiration.

The report notes that good work is already going on in many of the Theological Education Institutions (TEIs) around racial justice, including in the ongoing development of the formal curriculum. It provides Emmanuel Theological College as an example of a TEI that is adopting a positive and measurable approach [page 29].

The Commissioners are taking take a close interest in how the Triennium Funding is being disbursed and note that the Award Panel has now

allocated approximately £5.5 million (in addition to the approximately £5.6 million previously awarded by the Archbishops' Council): Grant Award letters have been issued and Grant Agreements have been issued and signed to the value of nearly £4 million [page 74].

Commenting, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby said: "As Lord Boateng makes clear in his foreword, at the halfway point of the Commission's remit there is still so much that needs to be done if we are to achieve our goal of a more diverse Church of England.

"I am very conscious of the need to act more quickly than we have to date to respond to the lack of Global Majority Heritage/UKME clergy in the senior ranks of the Church.

"But I am encouraged to read some of the wonderful examples where the Commission has encountered good practice."

The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell said: "These reports continue to remind us that we have a very long way to go if we are to become a truly representative church in the communities in which we work, better reflecting the diverse make-up of the people we are here to serve and bring to Christ".

Notes:

The Commission reports to the Archbishops every six months with recommendations to help the Archbishops fulfil their commitments to identify, respond to, and root out systemic racism in the Church.

The full membership of the Archbishops' Commission for Racial Justice:

- Chair: The Rt Hon Lord (Paul) Boateng, Former Cabinet Minister and High Commissioner to South Africa
- Professor Anthony Reddie, Department of Theology, University of Oxford
- The Revd Canon Dr Chigor Chike, Former Chair, Anglican Minority Ethnic Network (AMEN); Vicar, Forest Gate (Emmanuel with St Peter) Upton Cross, Chelmsford Diocese
- Professor Duncan Morrow, Department of Politics, Ulster University
- Dame Melanie Dawes, Chief Executive, Ofcom
- Professor Mike Higton, Department of Theology, Durham University
- Lord (Nat) Wei of Shoreditch, Serial Social Entrepreneur and Social Reformer
- Dr Nirmala Pillay, School of Law, Leeds Beckett University
- The Revd Canon Patricia Hillas, Chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons
- The Revd Canon Dr Philip Anderson, Canon Precentor, Liverpool Cathedral
- The Rt Revd Rose Hudson-Wilkin, Bishop of Dover
- The Revd Sonia Barron, Diocesan Director of Vocations, Diocese of Lincoln

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