

Racial Justice & Intercultural Ministry Advocate

Wessex Synod



Mrs. Enala Bhebhe

Introduction

As a new appointee to the role of Racial Justice advocate, I had the privilege to meet with other advocates and the coordinators at the church house on the consultation day. This took place on the 7th of November 2015. Twenty members attended the gathering from different synods.

The meeting was preceded by worship and biblical reflections on 'loving your God with all your mind, soul and heart and to love your neighbour as you love yourself'. We were encouraged to choose the compassionate side of God's law demonstrated on migrants, in the books of Leviticus 19:18 and Deuteronomy 15:2-3. The devotions were lead by the chairperson Rev John Potter.

Discussions included sharing of church experiences on commemorating the Black History month, the Racial Justice Sunday and other events on intercultural issues. Michael Jagessar, the Secretary for Racial Justice and intercultural Ministry discussed the theological perspective on immigration and asylum. He invited contributions and ideas on producing learning/teaching resources for the theme "at home in a strange place". Ideas for future meetings were also discussed. Lunch and drinks were free.

The role of the Racial Justice and intercultural Advocate include:

- To be active in helping to eradicate racial prejudice and discrimination and bringing about racial justice in church and community.
- To continue to learn and grow in faith and in the area of racial justice.
- To encourage and participate in racial justice and intercultural activities in synod.
- To make links with other United Reformed Church, ecumenical and community groups also committed to racial justice and intercultural issues. This includes interfaith groups and those working with refugees and asylum seekers.

Highlight of the Day

The power point presentation by Rev Phil Wall on how Black History month was commemorated at St David's Uniting church in Wales. Their theme was celebrating the life of the activist Paul Robeson. Exhibitions were performed in the schools, community and at church. Events were publicised in local radio stations and in newspapers. Invitations to celebrities and high profile people were made. Some fans of Paul Robeson from Australia and America came to the event to hear Sir Willard White sing. Some of the activities performed will be shared through the United Reformed Church website.

Invitation

Anyone passionate on the matters of racial and multicultural issues can join me in this role. Some Synods have more than one person. Please see me or Robert Weston or email me via the Synod Office office@urcwessex.org.uk or Robert at Minister@parkurc.org.uk

Announcements

1. There is a vision2020 grant which can be applied for church mission events. The form is found online <http://www.urc.org.uk/mission/vision2020-our-mission-strategy.html> or contact worldchurch@urc.org.uk .
2. Following the reviews of various posts in the Mission Team and the current vacancy for Secretary for World Church Relations, it is proposed to Mission

Council in November to reconfigure the post of Secretary for Racial Justice and Intercultural Ministry to include a strategic focus on World Church Relations and to rename it Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries. Additionally, a programme officer will be appointed to work with local churches to enable and deliver the Global and Intercultural work.

3. Any stories of racial justice happening in the Synods should be shared through advocates. Social media like face book would be a good place to help improve the sharing of such stories or contact tracey.hardingham@urc.org.uk .
4. Scripture Union had an unacceptable Halloween theme (alternative to darkness) which was challenged. We should be challenging matters of racial prejudice. Racial Justice and intercultural Ministry would like to know the stories including the encouraging ones.
5. As churches we should encourage and help local councils by providing rooms/houses for an asylum seeking community.
6. The next consultation will be on 7th of May 2016.