



## ST JOHN THE APOSTLE & EVANGELIST, WATFORD

### RACE EQUALITY POLICY

#### **Policy Statement**

The Parochial Church Council ('PCC') of the parish of St John the Apostle & Evangelist, Watford, records its opposition to racist discrimination and harassment, whether verbal, physical or attitudinal, whether intentional or inadvertent.

#### **Introduction**

There is a rich ethnic diversity in the parish. Our church community represents the whole human spectrum; people of all colours, cultures and ethnic groups stand together in prayer and they stand before God, equally, as his children. Our church membership, both lay and ordained, includes people with origins as diverse as African-Caribbean; Asian; African; North and South American; all parts of Europe and Australasia. All ethnic groups and cultures contribute to the richness of our church lives.

Racism continues to pervade all areas of our society and some members of our church are, sadly, no exception. In 'Seeds of Hope', the report on combating racism in the Church of England (1991), the Rt. Revd. John Sentamu defined racism as:

*"... the theory, prejudice and practice of disadvantaging or advantaging of someone solely on grounds of their colour, culture and ethnic origin."*

But racism is not just overt discrimination; it is also the hidden, subtle and often unconscious way in which we regard and treat people of other races and cultures. In 1981 Lord Scarman's report into the Brixton riots noted that racism could be 'unwitting', 'unconscious', and also 'unintentional'. It noted too that racism can be an unrecognised and an established part of our institutions. Lord Scarman also referred to 'institutional racism' and this was emphasised in the MacPherson Report (1999) on the Stephen Lawrence murder enquiry, in which institutional racism is defined as:

*"The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people."*

Racism should be both condemned and combated at all levels and in all areas of our church life. In 1988 Paul Boateng contributed to the British Council of Churches report "Challenging Racism in Britain" in which he stated that racism:

*"... scars our country and scars the world, racism represents for those of us who are Christians, a gaping wound in the body of Christ."*

Almost thirty years later, racism may still be as pervasive as ever and the body of Christ is still wounded. The Church, the body of Christ on earth, is made up of the rich diversity of all God's people and God does not recognise our human divisions of gender, culture, skin colour or ethnicity. *"There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus."*



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(Galatians 3:28) We are all made equally in the image of God (Gen 1:27) and as Christians our behaviour towards our fellow human beings should always reflect this truth. There are, however, many occasions which demonstrate that we do not always live up to this important aspect of our faith.

the Charter of the Catholic Association for Racial justice (2003) reminds us that:

*"Racism is not only a crime, it is a sin that violates Christ's command to 'love your neighbour as yourself'. How we treat one another cannot be separated from our relationship with God."*

#### **Responsibility**

Every member of the PCC is responsible for conducting themselves in a manner consistent with this Policy in all their church-related activities.

#### **Church Membership and Mission**

The PCC welcomes new church members from all cultures, including ethnic minorities. We commit to welcome members of ethnic minorities living in the parish, promoting their participation on parish electoral rolls and in the wider life of the parish.

In pursuing its mission to spread the Gospel among its members and in the community at large the PCC seeks to take into account the needs and preferences of all the members of our church community. It is important to avoid subtle as well as overt obstacles to diverse participation. Such obstacles might arise, for example, in the nature of:

- welcome to church activities;
- liturgy;
- instruction; and,
- social responsibility activities and community action.

At the same time the PCC commits to use the cultural diversity that is present in our communities to enrich their liturgy and church activities.

The PCC encourages the inclusion of racial justice issues in the church's teaching, worship and mission, taking advantage of opportunities such as Racial Justice Sunday.

#### **Appointed and elected positions**

The PCC wish to see the appointed and elected positions filled with people of ability, regardless of their ethnic origins. We would like to see this result in these positions being held by people with a balanced mix of ethnicity, broadly reflective of the composition of our congregation.



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#### **Awareness training**

The PCC acknowledges that discrimination and inappropriate behaviour can be either inadvertent or based on prejudice. The PCC may seek to minimise the incidence of inappropriate behaviour in the church by arranging awareness training for staff and officials, and also to take advantage of appropriate resources made available by the Diocese over time.

#### **Inappropriate behaviour**

The PCC commits to providing loving support and advice to all members of the church involved in an incident of racistly inappropriate behaviour, whether as the person affected or as the alleged perpetrator, in a manner consistent with the spirit of this Policy. We will endeavour to see such incidents (which we define along the lines of the Stephen Lawrence Report to be any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or any other person, acting reasonably) dealt with promptly and as fairly as possible.

#### **Definitions**

**Ethnicity:** refers to a person's identification with a group which shares some or all of the same culture, lifestyle, religion, nationality, geographical region and history. Everybody belongs to an ethnic group including, for example, the English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh.

**Racism:** in general terms consists of conduct or words or practices which disadvantage or advantage people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. In its more subtle form it is as damaging as in its over form. (Stephen Lawrence Report as quoted by CMEAC)

**Institutional Racism:** The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people.

It persists because of the failure of the organisation openly and adequately to recognise and address its existence and causes by policy, example and leadership. Without recognition and action to eliminate such racism it can prevail as part of the ethos or culture of the organisation as a disease.

**A racist incident or racistly inappropriate behaviour:** is any incident which is perceived to be racist by the victim or by any other person, acting reasonably.

#### **Review**

The PCC's Race Equality Policy will be reviewed triennially, or sooner in response to new legislation, policies or guidance, or specific demand and feedback.



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#### **Dealing with racistly inappropriate behaviour**

When any incident of inappropriate behaviour involving clergy, church staff or congregation members occurs in the parish, the following steps are recommended if the incident is to be resolved within the church structures. These steps are without prejudice to the legal rights and responsibilities of the individuals involved. However, if police or legal action arises from an incident, that action will take precedence over any PCC action.

#### Making a note of the incident

In the event of an incident of inappropriate behaviour the people involved are strongly advised to write down exactly what happened, when, where and in the presence of whom. Such a record should include any words used and witness statements if possible and should be made as soon as possible after the alleged incident has occurred.

#### Initial informal response

The first step in response to an incident is for the person affected to consider requesting the alleged perpetrator(s) either orally or in writing not to repeat that behaviour. The person affected might go to the perpetrator alone or with a friend, or follow up with a friend if a one-to-one approach does not work. We hope that many incidents will be resolved with understanding and respect in this way.

#### Formal resolution

If such a response does not lead to a satisfactory outcome; or if the person affected does not wish to confront the alleged perpetrator; or if the person affected thinks that a more significant response is required, then further action is necessary. At this stage, the person affected might wish to consult a friend or colleague for advice. Where relevant, they might wish to take advice on their legal rights.

Incidents of racistly inappropriate behaviour that are not able to be resolved informally and are not subject to police or legal action will be dealt with through existing grievance procedures, taking account of the spirit of this policy.

- any incident which falls under the grievance procedures shall be dealt with under that policy;
- any incident involving a member of the clergy shall be dealt with by the Diocese;
- any incident within the parish that does not involve a complaint against a member of the clergy should be handled within the parish. The PCC may wish to consult the Diocesan Race Equality Committee if an independent perspective is appropriate.

Complaints of incidents should be discussed fully and frankly, and with sensitivity for the concerns of the person affected.



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#### **Records**

A record of any incident of racistly inappropriate behaviour should be kept, including details such as date, time, and individuals involved. It is important to keep factual records, and separate these from any opinions expressed.

All records should be held in a secure, locked cabinet in the parish office.

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