

## Newcastle Diocesan Synod Racial Justice Update

'Freedom is coming!' is an exuberant South African song of praise which arose during the Apartheid period. The second verse, 'Jesus is coming!' positions it clearly as a song of faith and a prayer for transformation. It was one of many spiritual songs sung on the 'long walk to freedom' in that period.

Racial justice is not just a good thing to do, nor yet another thing to put right in church and society, but part of our journey, our long walk, towards Jesus Christ. Though progress is slow, racial justice is part of Christ's irresistible work of reconciling all things with God (Colossians 1).

In December last year, this Synod accepted a report and approved 10 recommendations (see [paper DS23 18](#)) for ways in which our Diocese might engage more intentionally with racial justice, to be implemented over the next 5 years.

In terms of those recommendations, the first two are our agreed principles:

- 1) The Diocesan Synod reaffirms that all people are created in the image of God and are equal, and recognises that Racial Justice is a particular focus which sits within a larger commitment to equality, diversity and inclusion in our diocese.
- 2) The Diocesan Synod affirms Racial Justice as a key priority for each one of us in our mission and is an urgent response to some of the injustices, inequalities and prejudices experienced daily in our communities and churches, yet unseen by many in our congregations.

The third recommendation is the establishment of a Racial Justice Task Group. On 6 February 2024, Bishop's Council approved a task group membership to include:

- At least 2 Diocesan Synod representatives
- A Diocesan Communications Team representative
- A Diocesan Training/Vocations Team representative
- A Chaplaincy representative with experience in Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- A Cathedral representative
- At least 2 members from the wider diocese
- A member of Bishop's Staff as chair (currently the Bishop of Berwick)

If you are interested in being a Diocesan Synod representative, please be in touch with the Diocesan Secretary.

The Racial Justice Task Group will seek to enable the implementation of the rest of the recommendations agreed by Synod with a regular report to Synod and an annual review of progress.

In addition, we have launched a [Racial Justice page](#) on the diocesan website which will serve to share and promote related information and events.

Our determined prayer and our unrelenting hope continues to be 'Freedom is coming!'

+ Mark Berwick  
St David's Day 2024