

1. General Statement

May 25th 2020 is a date that is forever etched in history because of the brutal, racially charged murder of George Floyd. He was killed by a white police officer who knelt on his neck for 9 minutes and 29 seconds! Millions heard him pant and plead for his life, plead that he couldn't breathe, and call out for his mother!

This was another tragic and traumatic experience and a reminder to those of colour, that there is still little racial justice and equality in our world. So we at St Nic's, along with churches up and down this country, had no choice but to look at racial injustice and face the question, 'What are we going to do about it'?

Racism is sin and is rooted in the idea that certain people are inferior to others because of their skin colour and/or ethnicity. Racism is embedded within our society, has become systemic and is now recognised as being present in the Church of England.

We the Church must be a guiding light by our demonstration of what flows from God's heart about equality for all people. It's astounding that our UKME brothers and sisters experience the pain of racism/discrimination within our society and in the House of the Lord.

At St Nic's we endeavour to stand against the evil of racism, doing all we can to be a Church that expresses love through action and that says 'NO' to racism. We are aware that this is a journey and not a sprint and are committed to driving positive change in this area. We acknowledge that this is a time for us to listen to those within our church and community that have experienced racism. We will be supportive and make spaces for conversations and learning, in order to create a family and culture of real equality for everyone.

In July 2020 a group of mainly UKME people were invited by the Rector into an online forum to share their experiences of racism. The Rector then asked them to invite some 'influencers' to join them and to form WeR1 under Marsha Farmer's leadership in order to promote racial justice within the church. At its meeting on 18th January 2021, the PCC affirmed the work of WeR1 and invited them to draft this policy. The committee consists of St Nic's church members and leaders who are people of colour and white (with a roughly even proportion). We, in the PCC of St Nics and the congregation will work alongside WeR1 to achieve this goal.

"If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it"

1 Corinthians 12:26-27

The members of WeR1 are:

Marsha Farmer
Priscilla Paradise
Andy Day
Janet Willcocks
Franklyn Ogosi

David Adama
Kez Knightingale
Mike Davis
Penceta Stone
Tamaryn Palmer
Tsemaye Agboghoroma
Cat Cooper

This policy was inspired by the Parochial Church Council of All Saints Highertown, Truro's own anti-racism policy that they brought into effect from 16th September 2020.

2. Principles

Underpinning this anti-racism policy are six biblically sound principles.

2.1 We will join with others to acknowledge and lament the history of racism in this country and within the church.

"Have mercy on me, Lord, for I am in distress. Tears blur my eyes. My body and soul are withering away" – Psalm 31:9

Lamenting is an expression of grief, sorrow or mourning. It is an emotional response that enables a deeper connection to form with the harm that has been done. St Nic's is a church that seeks to emotionally connect with the issue of racism and with those who have been victims of it. It is a place that does not hide from its history and enables individuals to engage with where they have fallen short. We understand that lamenting and calling others to lament is the first stage in engaging in anti-racist work and seeing healing in our community, city and nation. As a church, we will join with others to engage with national initiatives such as Racial Justice Sunday.

2.2 We will endeavour to be a church who will listen, empathise, and have compassion on victims of racism.

"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience..." - Colossians 3:12

We want to listen to and amplify the voices of those who have been victims of racism. We want our church to be a place where those who have been broken by this evil feel understood, valued, and loved. St Nic's will not be a place where feelings of grief and pain will be repressed or denied because it is a place that understands that acknowledging and processing those feelings are part of the healing process. We will have compassion on all who are processing and dealing with their lived reality of this issue. We will listen with humility, even when listening to experiences that challenge the listener or make the listener uncomfortable.

2.3 We will join with others to repent of our individual racism and our collective sin of institutional racism.

"...For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" – Romans 3: 23

We want to understand the full scope of the issue to understand how much we need forgiveness extending to us. We are a church that understands that there is a spectrum of different ways we can negatively contribute to the issue of racism and all of them fall short of the glory of God. We will seek forgiveness from God, through Jesus and we will seek to forgive others in Jesus' name too. We will seek to forgive those who truly repent of their part in individual instances of racism, but also in their part contributing to, and/or not challenging institutional racism.

"The arrogance of Israel testifies against her; Israel and Ephraim will stumble under their load of guilt" - Hosea 5:5

"O Israel and Judah what should I do with you?" asks the Lord. "For your love vanishes like the morning mist and disappears like dew in the sunlight... I want you to know me more than I want burnt offerings. But like Adam you broke my covenant and betrayed my trust"- Hosea 6: 4 -7

To create a church that can be a place of racial reconciliation we need to acknowledge that the church and western society has a legacy of creating and maintaining a world that disadvantages and victimises ethnic minorities. In Hosea, God holds the nation of Israel to account for how it as a collective fell short of the glory of God. At St Nics, in collaboration with the whole church, we hear, acknowledge and repent of our collective sin. In the Old Testament, guilt and shame is not framed in an individualistic way but calls for communal repentance. St Nics will be a place that understands this and helps others to understand this too.

2.4 We will endeavour to look for and act when there are opportunities to give reparations to individuals and communities who have been wronged by racism.

"But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount." - Luke 19:8

The current dialog and debate around reparations to UKME communities has created a broader definition of the term 'reparations'. There is now an understanding that the giving of reparations can be far broader than the giving of money or the returning of culturally significant items. This broader understanding of the term helps to recognise the multifaceted ways that UKME communities have been held at a disadvantage within society in the past, but also in the present. As the Human Rights Watch defines it:

"By "reparations" we mean not only compensation but also acknowledgment of past abuses, an end to ongoing abuses, and, as much as possible, restoration of the state of affairs that would have prevailed had there been no abuses." (HRW 2001)

St Nics is a church that acknowledges the principles of 2.1 and 2.3 and understand that it stands in a place of financial, resource, relational, and cultural privilege in Nottingham. It is a place that wants to use its power, influence and agency to help

UKME communities stand with a more equal footing. When the term reparations is used in this document, it is with that broader understanding of the term.

St Nic's is a church that understands that we cannot earn God's forgiveness. We seek to make amends out of an overflow of the thankfulness that comes from understanding how much we need God's forgiveness. We understand that generations of wrongdoing cannot be undone, but we seek to see the Kingdom of God grow in Nottingham and our nation by reconciliation and restorative justice. This will be hard work and will come at a cost, but as part of being an anti-racist church, we must seek God's justice.

2.5 We will seek to create a church where people of colour feel they are welcomed.

"Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God" - Romans 15:7

"For in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."- Galatians 3:26-28

Welcoming others and being a family of Christ in unity, overcoming social or racial divides is a key part of God's heart for His church and what we aim for at St Nic's. However, we acknowledge that many of people of colour do not feel welcome or have a sense of belonging within the Church of England and that many within St Nic's have shared similar sentiments and experiences.

Therefore, we will partner with WeR1 to learn and engage the church congregation in ways to change this. We will be open to reviewing traditions in St Nic's church life. This may include increasing diversity at every level in the service (leaders, the leadership team and customs), encouraging interracial relationship-building across the church, as well as considering intricacies within our practice that are filtered through a 'white lens' to enrich our understanding of God and experience of the church.

2.6 We will strive to nurture young people of colour at St Nic's.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." – Matthew 28:19-20.

The most recent data available reveals that 3.8% of the stipendiary clergy on the Commissioner's payroll, and 1.6% of senior staff are from a UKME background (Church of England, 2019).

St Nic's prioritises the commission of Jesus (to make disciples of all nations) within Nottingham and while the lack of diversity in leadership across the Church of England requires a multi-pronged approach, St Nic's recognises that individual churches have a part to play in encouraging the growth of young disciples from a UKME background. It is challenging for young UKME people to access the opportunities available for them to develop their gifts and talents if they do not regularly see those from their communities in places within church where their gifts and talents are used. It is also challenging for those within UKME communities to see themselves as mentors, when they do not see mentors who are from their community too.

Mentorship is way to encourage and invest in young disciples in their Christian journey and build on leadership skills within the church, a practice used in various forms throughout the Bible and Church history. We also note that there may already be UKME people of all ages, with excellent leadership skills and qualities. St Nic's will therefore be increasingly pro-active in developing relationships and investing in those within the UKME community, to ensure they feel welcomed to access or provide a mentoring relationship.

3. Action

Below are 15 proposed actions that flow out of the principles above.

Online Presence

- 3.1** We will have a page on the St Nic's website dedicated to antiracism within the church to give online space for education, testimonies and contact information. The antiracism policy will be viewable on this page, as well as the pathway to raise concerns.
- 3.2** The St Nic's blog will include and encourage blog posts about experiences of racism and how to tackle it as part of the churches educational journey.

Mentorship for young people of colour

- 3.3** We will create a mentorship system that prioritises pairing young UKME people with a mentor, and they will be given the choice as to whether they would prefer a mentor who is of similar ethnicity to them.

Panel Discussions and reparations

- 3.4** St Nic's will have regular panel discussions at church to discuss relevant issues within the church's journey toward antiracism. This will begin at twice a year, to be reviewed annually.
- 3.5** St Nic's acknowledges it is about to add to its resource privilege with the development of 79 Maid Marian Way. It will prayerfully consider how this privilege can be used to benefit and offer reparation to UKME people in the community.

Recruitment, Staff awareness and Training

- 3.6** Church staff and leaders will be aware of the importance of accurate and representative portrayal of biblical and theological figures. This should be considered when using imagery (e.g. paintings, pictures, maps) or selecting sources for sermons.
- 3.7** During the recruitment process for the St Nic's staff team, all personal details will be removed for purposes of shortlisting to guard against unconscious bias.
- 3.8** As St Nics' staff team is underrepresented by people from UKME backgrounds, St Nics will take positive action by encouraging people from UKME backgrounds to apply for paid and volunteer roles.
- 3.8.1** One of those positive actions would be to distribute future vacancies across existing UKME networks to encourage applications
- 3.8.2** St Nics will explore how the recruitment process can be changed to encourage a greater diversity in applicants.
- 3.9** St Nics will investigate how to confidentially track the percentage of paid staff and the percentage of applicants to advertised paid roles that are from UKME backgrounds to gain a picture of the make-up of the workforce over time.
- 3.10** St Nics will investigate how to confidentially track the percentage of people in volunteer roles that are from UKME backgrounds, to gain a picture of the make-up of the workforce over time.

Diversity in Worship and Social events

- 3.11** We will encourage diversity in worship such as style and song choices, empowering the creativity of the worship team to do this.
- 3.12** We will encourage unity and relationship building within our church family in an accessible way for all, through shared Church lunches and social evenings which explore and celebrate the diversity of cultures within the church.

Communicating and Reviewing the Antiracism Policy

- 3.13** We will develop a clear pathway in which to raise concerns about witnessing or having a direct experience of racism. We will also facilitate safe conversations where there is disagreement on matters arising from this policy.
- 3.14** Equal opportunities and Safeguarding policies will be updated to include the specific issue of racism.
- 3.15** The policy will be presented by WeR1 member(s) to the PCC to ensure communication and understanding.
- 3.16** All current and new employees will be required to sign the St Nic's Antiracism Policy.
- 3.17** Staff annual objectives will include measurable aims that seek to incorporate the guidance of the policy.
- 3.18** The PCC will carry out an annual review of this policy and the progress in its implementation. It will become a standing item on the PCC agenda and WeR1 representatives on the PCC will speak to it. This will help to hold the church accountable to the policy. While WeR1 exists, it will also be part of the review process and can offer comments, suggestions, and changes. In the event that WeR1 dissolves or is rebranded, that will trigger a review of this policy to ensure the appropriate stakeholder groups are listed and involved in its review.

References

St Nic's Antiracism Policy 2021 [FINAL]

Human Rights Watch (2001) An Approach to Reparations.

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Parochial Church Council of All Saints Highertown, Truro. (2020) Anti-racism Policy.

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The Church of England (2019) Research and Statistics: Ministry statistics 2019

Key terms:

UKME – UK Minority Ethnic. This is the term the Church of England has chosen to replace BAME.

“There is no classification that is acceptable to all, and notions of nationality and identity are constantly evolving. Within the Church of England, the acronym UKME has been adopted as recognition that within the UK there are people from a minority ethnic background, but *only* because they are in the UK.”

See this article for a full explanation: <https://www.dioceseofnorwich.org/news/whats-in-a-name-why-karlenes-role-title-has-changed/>