



# into the Melting Pot

*the question is more important than the answer*

**Sunday 10 January 2021**

## **'People Like Us' – White Middle-Class Privilege**

At the start of this century, as we were establishing On-Line@9 as a new contemporary interactive service at Christchurch, I was enthusiastically involved and looking for modern songs we could use. I came across a CD by Hillsong (a mega-church in Sydney Australia) called 'People Like Us'; it featured newly written songs with an up-tempo rock style backing, along with older hymns given a rock update. Lots of congregation karaoke, smiling faces, nicely dressed happy people. All white.

Even back then I felt uncomfortable with that title. Ignoring the (intended?) play on words – although people generally don't 'like' church people – it smacked of self-centred smugness. What sort of 'us' does this mean? Does it mean there's a 'them'?

Fifteen years later, following very public police brutality in America with the killing of George Floyd in particular, the 'Black Lives Matter' campaign got a kick start. 'Taking the knee' became an acceptable symbol (the San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick was doing this back in 2016; Donald Trump asked owners to fire such players; in 2017 he was cut from the team, and remains unsigned due to political pressure).

In Britain, people started examining our history of Empire, questioning the validity of some Victorian benefactors whose wealth came from exploitation (mostly the slave trade). Statues were defaced or removed. Names have been changed. There was a flurry of Black History programmes on BBC 4.

So where is it going? Will it make a difference? What about us?

- Do we recognise that we all have privilege?
- Look around our church community; is everyone 'like us'? Is this an issue?
- How much contact have you had with people NOT 'like us'?
- How do you react? Do you stereotype people in a different group to your own? How do you overcome this trait?
- Can we examine our attitudes to race, gender, class, faith, sexuality, . . . (mostly instilled into us as children as part of our cultural inheritance) and seek to overcome the barriers it perpetuates?
- Do you actively seek out cross-racial, cross-class, cross faith, relationships if you don't currently enjoy any?
- If you come across racism, homophobia, misogyny, . . . do you call it out (not to change the person but for your own integrity)?
- What should 'the church' be doing?
- What should our church be doing?
- What should we be doing?