

Repentance and Restoration Projects in the Diocese of Bristol

In June 2020, following the death of George Floyd, the rise in interest in Black Lives Matter and the toppling of the Colston statue in Bristol, the Bishop of Bristol made a commitment on behalf of the diocese to address issues of racism in the church, she committed to act with a renewed sense of urgency and determination to:

- Acknowledge and repent of the Church's past involvement in and benefit from the slave trade;
- Challenge and address institutional racism, listening to and learning from the experiences of Black, Asian and minority ethnic people;
- Recruit and support more Black, Asian and minority ethnic clergy, staff and volunteers;
- Make our churches truly welcoming to everyone, taking responsibility for the need for profound cultural change in our Church.
- Work with others in the Diocese of Bristol and the Church of England to bring these things about

In order to deliver these commitments the Bishop has set up a Racial Justice Task Group, supported by an Advisory Group. The Task Group meets monthly and the Advisory Group termly. Together they expect to oversee a number of projects that will be delivered by external partners or commissioned directly from qualified individuals. These projects include:

A survey of monuments and other heritage assets in the diocese which honour men and women who benefitted from the labour of trafficked Africans, were compensated for the loss of enslaved Africans at the abolition of slavery, or were paid for by men and women from these groups. This work is being undertaken a PhD student from York university supported by academics and historians in Bristol. The survey will be used by the diocese to inform decisions regarding the narratives that are told about the history of the church in the diocese, including the legacy of slavery and imperialism. We anticipate that this work, together with work being undertaken at Bristol Cathedral, will contribute to seminars and workshops in Bristol that might take place before the Mayor of Bristol's History Commission "We are Bristol" reports in 2023.

An engagement exercise, building on work already undertaken with people of African and Afro-Caribbean heritage in Bristol (Project TRUTH, commissioned by the Bristol City Council's Legacy group) we will seek to hear views on reparations, monuments and memorialisation, acknowledging past racism in the church and building a better future from Anglicans with African and Afro-Caribbean heritage in the diocese. Views from other global majority heritage Anglicans, and global majority heritage Christians may also be sought.

In order to recruit and support more Black, Asian and minority ethnic clergy, staff and volunteers, we seek to work in partnership with a specialist organisation who can offer training and mentoring to potential leaders, especially volunteers who can contribute to the governance of the Cathedral. This might include, for example, reverse mentoring or shadowing Boards and Committees in the diocese, Board of Education and Cathedral.

We will also look for partners who are providing training in intercultural intelligence and affirmative action that goes beyond Unconscious Bias Training. We seek to be a leader in the Church of England in making rapid and evident progress so that our global majority heritage curates, for example, are deployed in incumbent status posts in the diocese and feel supported.

We will provide a programme of art, theology, and worship to engage both adults and young people in experiencing the breadth of the world wide church. This will be focussed on Black History Month in October at the Cathedral and one or two other flag ship churches. It will include support for multi-cultural congregations and worship, opportunities for black theology seminars, high profile speakers and preachers.

The Projects in Detail (including potential partners and costs)

MONUMENTS

This project is underway and fully funded (details can be added)

Next steps: Researcher to meet Bishops Chaplain, DAC staff, and other interested parties to scope the first stage of the work. Also to meet Cathedral Monuments Audit Reference Group for introductions to key Bristol institutions.

ENGAGEMENT

A project to involve members of minority communities in the Diocese of Bristol, particularly (but not exclusively) those who are Anglicans in contributing to our strategy with regard to contested heritage and/or the wider implications of the legacy of slavery particularly among the Windrush Generation, or second or third generation Afro-Caribbean people for example.

This might include

- Setting up and running focus groups
- Supporting parishes with contested heritage in engaging with those who are most impacted by that heritage (for example, descendants of enslaved Africans with particular links to significant Bristol slave owning or trading families or institutions) eg acting as mediators or facilitators in such conversations (we might be able to identify a small number of locations for this work?)
- Drawing together emerging outcomes from the Mayor of Bristol's History Commission, Bristol City Council Legacy Group and projects initiated by them
- Planning an event or events for larger scale testing of ideas or consultation in a range of locations

It would be important that such a project does not re-invent the wheel but is attentive to work already being carried out. However, there is an internal, Church of England dimension where we could be working with those who are closest to the issues/most immediately impacted.

Key partners – The Dean, DAC, Bishops Chaplain (to inform strategy)

Next steps – Dean to meet with Ruth Pitter (Project TRUTH project officer) to scope costs and consider whether she, or someone else, would take on this work.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

(note- language sensitivity here. I have used ethnic minority, others prefer global majority heritage)

A project to support greater diversity in our governance structures by supporting individuals from ethnic minorities who may be recruited or co-opted on to Synods, Boards and Councils, or by supporting individuals who will act as reverse mentors to individuals, Chairs or Boards. This might include

- Advising on recruitment to voluntary roles
- Working with key individuals to support recruitment (eg key parish clergy or Area Deans)
- Offering training to newly recruited or co-opted board/synod members
- Identifying or recruiting ethnic minority co-optees or reverse mentors
- Supporting those co-optees or reverse mentors
- Offering feedback and advice to develop diversity among governance structures for the long term (ie structural, linguistic, presentational changes).

This is more likely to be a contract with a provider than a “project” as such, and we might need to investigate the options with some of the organisations that do this kind of advice and support work to understand their methodologies and pricing structures.

Key partners – Director of People and Safeguarding, Diocesan Secretary

Next step – research potential partners and scope costings for two or three activities that would make a difference over 12 to 24 months.

TRAINING (UBT and Cultural literacy)

A project to devise, design or co-create and test appropriate training in eg Unconscious Bias, Racial Awareness, Cultural Literacy. This would provide additional resources to the Ministry Team to enable them to move at a faster pace with more confidence in delivering appropriate training to clergy and parishes.

This might be done in partnership with others (relevant dioceses, CMEAC) if the resource could be shared – but there is an administrative and resource deficit for the Diocese of Bristol at the moment.

Alternatively, consider training that is already on offer where the diocese does not currently have the resources to buy it in.

Key partner – Director of Ministry

Next step – a steer is needed from the Director of Ministry regarding the best way forward and the interventions likely to have the most impact, in the short and medium term.