



ALL CREATED EQUAL

OVER the last week and a half, I have found myself grieving and hurting for the world in which we live, as I saw the tragic death of **George Floyd** at the hands of a white policeman. My prayers, as I'm sure yours are, are with George Floyd's family and those grieving and hurting as a result of racism.

I know that this incident is not a one-off and not limited to the United States. So, at this time it's vital that Christians stand together, to unite across all ethnicities and join in saying and showing that all people are equal, regardless of their race or ethnicity.



As Christians, we are the body of Christ, so "if one part suffers, every part suffers with it" (1 Corinthians 12:26). Today, our brothers and sisters are suffering and hurting. We, as part of the UK church, are to stand with and stand up for our Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) brothers and sisters in the UK and throughout the world at this time.

I acknowledge, and I'm sorry that the Church throughout time has not always done right by this issue; we have been silent when we should have spoken louder. But today, I want to encourage us that we can do better and we must do better. There can be no place for racism in our society.

The Church needs to be part of the solution, not the problem. This is not a 'white vs black' issue, but instead, it requires the Church to stand together to fight every form of racism throughout our society, for our God loves and cares for each and every person.

There is beauty in the diversity of the Church. A friend of mine, in men's ministry, once went for a curry night with 22 men from his Baptist, aged between 16 and 80 and from 15 different ethnic backgrounds. During a conversation, the Bangladeshi waiter said to my friend: "You must be from a church because no other group in our community could bring such a diverse group for dinner."

Isn't that a beautiful picture? The Church as a place of diversity and inclusivity? So, let us strive to ensure the church here in Stanford, Goosey & Hatford represent the diversity of the body of Christ, that it is welcoming and inclusive, where we are all one and equal. In Isaiah, there is the command to "learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed" (Isaiah 1:17a).

So, as we stand as a united people and Church, let us not forget that our calling as Christians is to seek to be light to those around us. We need to speak up, stand together and challenge what is not right at all levels of society: our institutions, our communities, our churches, and our own minds.

Steps we can take? Well, we can pray – pray for those hurting and pray for God's mercy and breakthrough on this issue. We can continue to speak up and out on injustices. Speak to our local MP, employers, friends and family. We can listen, we can learn, and we can change.

I would like to recommend **We Need To Talk About Race by Ben Lindsay** – a great book for showing the history of race and the church. It will help to enable us to work together to create a church that is truly inclusive. We cannot stay silent. We all need to work together to make a difference in our country and be the Church that is required.

I pray that the Lord will move powerfully across the world at this time.

STANFORD JOB SUPPORT GROUP

I AM thrilled at the response, thus far, by those who have responded and offered their expertise to help any local person find a job – having been made redundant as a result of Covid-19.

The database that I am in the process of creating, is of local people willing to help other villagers seek employment - offering their services for free.

I've already got 14 villagers offering expert help, but maybe you have a gift or an experience to offer?

If you can help, please email vicar@stdenys.org so you can join in a Zoom chat this coming week of volunteers – and we can get going!

STAY AT HOME FESTIVAL

ARE you ready for Sunday 14th June?

With the theme of 'Alice in Wonderland' with a 'Mad Hatters Afternoon Tea', we can all get involved with a Stanford Festival with a difference.

Many thanks to Karin Williams-Cuss (718637) for her imagination in making this possible.

• **The 2021 Stanford Festival, organised and hosted by St Denys Church will be on 19/20 June.**

SUNDAY READINGS & MESSAGE

THE Bible Readings for this Sunday are 2 Corinthians 13: 11-end, and Matthew 28: 16-20 – the Great Commission.

Instead of me providing some reflections on this passage, may I encourage you to click on the link below and hear the powerful summary of why the GC is so important.

Click <https://youtu.be/bhuZ8lvbdb8>

PRAYER TOPICS FOR THE WEEK

Fr – The Ambulance & Fire Services

Sat – Our local Councillors

Sun – Bishop Steven (Oxford)

Mon – Stanford Primary School

Tue – Those facing redundancy

Wed – Those leaving Primary/Secondary school

Thur – Messy Church families

Fri - Local businesses starting back up

BIBLE READINGS FOR MORNING PRAYER

THESE have been circulated with this FFN. It is good to hear that a few people are using these regularly. I'm also delighted to hear that a number of folk who usually attend the 9am Book of Common Prayer Holy Communion Services are quietly, and reflectively, reading through the service

each Sunday, starting at 9am, in their own homes – but connected to each other by the Spirit!

NEXT BISHOP OF DORCHESTER

THE current bishop, Colin Fletcher, retires in October, and the Bishop of Oxford, Steven Croft (*pictured below*), has been prayerfully searching for a successor.

Oxford is one of the largest dioceses in the Church of England, and largely rural. The Dorchester Archdeaconry is almost all rural parishes and as such, huge missional and strategic decisions need to be taken soon to enable a missional presence in communities and, to reduce the administrative and building-focussed burdens many PCCs are faced with.

In our own deanery, we have 27 churches for a small population and yet, there are huge evangelistic opportunities amongst young families and older folk, if we can focus on growth, and not on the trappings of building maintenance.



Covid-19 has made many parishes think about their current financial position and, the future viability of their congregations. Here in this parish, in addition to providing for the ongoing spiritual and liturgical needs of our existing congregations, the PCC has been developing a missional plan to reach new families with the Gospel, and to see them become disciples of Christ – fulfilling the Great Commission (*see Sunday's Bible readings*). We are excited about the future.

It is vital that the new Bishop of Dorchester has a passion for mission, is orthodox on Biblical issues and is prepared to make strategic and missional decisions – helping parishes move from building-focused pastoral ministry to outward-focused, Gospel ministry.

Please pray for Bishop Steven as he seeks to appoint such a strategic successor to bishop Colin,, and for bishop Colin, as he prepares for retirement.

With my love and prayers
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