

Racial Diversity and Belonging at All Saints Peckham

Three year Strategy 2023-2025

Executive summary

A worldwide, multi-national, multi-ethnic worshipping family, gathered around the person of Jesus, the lamb on the throne, has always been in the heart and plan of God.

Sadly, sinful humanity has often not responded to this direction of the Holy Spirit. The history of the church shows that the sin of racism has too often compromised its worship and witness. As part of the body of Christ, we repent of the sin of racial division and of complacency. We long that we would not be conformed to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds in Christ Jesus. As we humble ourselves and pray, we long and expect to see God bring healing to our land, and unity to His church in the UK, and here in Peckham.

In the aftermath of the death of George Floyd in May 2020, All Saints started a process of listening, discussion and reflection on the experiences of brothers and sisters who had suffered racism, and of addressing racism at both personal and institutional levels. This process has resulted in the following racial diversity and belonging strategy for the next three years.

The strategy is expressed in terms of five areas of fruit we want to see, and key actions we commit ourselves to taking.

1. Theological confidence and prayerful grounding in God's vision and plan for a multi-ethnic family

- Root All Saints work of diversity and inclusion in prayer
- Develop an integrated teaching approach on racial justice
- Invite diverse preachers / speakers who will broaden our theological perspectives

2. Deeper relationships of love in our church community

- Promote greater participation in more diverse, inclusive small groups.
- Annual public recommitment to be a church that promotes racial diversity and belonging

3. Wider doors to welcome everyone

- Develop a culture of welcome that covers people's whole experience at All Saints
- Enriched and deeper experience of collective worship

4. Diversity and representation throughout church leadership.

- Develop new leaders from under-represented groups.
- Promote diversity in recruitment processes
- Support / training for leaders (staff, PCC, ministry leads) on diversity and inclusion

5. Speaking and acting in the community to promote God's kingdom vision for racial justice

- Support local groups working for justice and inclusion
- Respond publicly and in a culturally sensitive way as church leadership to relevant local events and issues

“After this I looked, and before me, there was a great multitude that no-one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: “Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb”” (Rev 7.9-10).

This picture, of the end of the age, brings to beautiful fulfilment the promise made to Abraham, that through his offspring (Israel, fulfilled perfectly in Jesus), every nation on earth would be blessed (Genesis 12.3, Genesis 22.18). As Isaiah the prophet hears God Almighty speak of the Servant of the Lord “It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back those of Israel I have kept. I will also make you a light for the Gentiles, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.” (Isaiah 29.6).

A worldwide, multi-national, multi-ethnic worshipping family, gathered around the person of Jesus, the Lamb on the throne, has always been in the heart and plan of God. This is the family of God, birthed out of the love that brought the universe into being - the Trinity, a divine community of self-giving love. Since Pentecost, the Holy Spirit has been birthing an outstanding variety of expressions of this family across the world.

We see that the work of the Spirit, and the co-operation of God’s people in His transforming work, leads to:

- **The Church rooted in prayer**, standing out as being different, **showing a heavenly wisdom to the earthly powers through its distinctive witness** (Ephesians 3:10)
- **Deeper relationships** - the **love and unity** for which Jesus prayed (John 17.21), and by which the followers of Jesus were, from the beginning, distinctive (John 13.35). It includes standing with brothers and sisters who are suffering, as part of one body of Christ, and honouring each other (1 Cor 12:26);
- **Wider doors** - meaning no-one is excluded from **the invitation to encounter Jesus** (see the story of Cornelius in Acts 10);
- **Diversity in leadership** (see the church in Antioch, Acts 13.1) as the gospel impacts every community and culture on earth;
- **God’s gathered people, His church, making a difference in the community**, speaking out and taking action against injustice and segregation, rooted in the call of the Old Testament prophets (Micah 6:8). (see the book of Philemon, in which a slaveowner is compelled by the love of Jesus to free a former slave and embrace him as a brother in Christ).

Sadly, sinful humanity has often not responded to this direction of the Holy Spirit. Where the Kingdom of God is one of unity in Christ, through vibrant diversity, the Kingdom of the earth is often characterised by hierarchy and division, or the dull destructiveness of uniformity.

The history of the church shows that the sin of racism has too often compromised its worship and witness. Sometimes this has been in explicit segregation, for example, in the UK church cooperating with or benefitting financially¹ from, and even theologically justifying the evils of transatlantic slavery. Often it has been in complacency, a failure to recognise or challenge patterns that perpetuate racial

¹ [Church Commissioners publishes full report into historic links to transatlantic chattel slavery and announces new funding commitment of £100m in response to findings | The Church of England](#)

injustice and division. We recognise that the church experiences less of the riches of God's blessing if some voices or peoples are excluded. For example, here in the UK, when the Windrush Generation were turned away from many churches through the narrowness and evil of racial prejudice, this sin wounded those who were excluded, and left the UK church weaker and poorer, by failing to grasp the gifts of God being held out - an outworking of God's judgement.

This has also been part of the story of the church from its earliest times. In the book of Acts, chapter 6, we see how racial division between the Hebrew and Greek communities threatened the work and witness of the early church. A Spirit-filled group was appointed to ensure that this was reckoned with.

The experience of racism is still a reality for too many today, in interpersonal relationships (e.g. discrimination, microaggressions) and structural inequalities. **We lament that where the church is called to a distinctive witness, it has been and is caught up in this sin, including All Saints Peckham.**

As part of the body of Christ, we repent of the sin of racial division and of complacency. We long that we would not be conformed to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of our minds in Christ Jesus. As we humble ourselves and pray, we long and expect to see God bring healing to our land, and unity to His church in the UK, and here in Peckham.

In the aftermath of the death of George Floyd in May 2020, All Saints started a process of listening, discussion and reflection on the experiences of brothers and sisters who had suffered racism, and of addressing racism at both personal and institutional levels. This started with a process we called Listening for a Change in 2020, stewarded by a Diversity Task Force. A subgroup of the PCC, the Racial Diversity and Belonging (RDB) Group, was then created in 2021 to help us live out this repentance and follow the vision that Christ gives of a transformed multicultural and diverse community.

The aims of the RDB group are:

- To give attention to the recommendations of the 'Listening for a Change' (LfaC) report, catalysing and taking action as needed.
- To help the church leadership and PCC in building the genuinely multi-cultural and diverse church Jesus is calling All Saints to grow into.
- To communicate what we are doing to the congregation.

Supporting the vision of All Saints that we are: ALL one in Christ; SAINTS being transformed in encounter with Jesus; Rooted in and called to our community in PECKHAM, the RDB seeks to co-operate with the Spirit of God as He builds a church that welcomes, celebrates, understands and reflects the racial diversity of Peckham.

We believe God calls us to a radical unity in Jesus, and the RDB group has a focus on enabling All Saints to identify and, enabled by His Spirit, proactively challenge the barriers which prevent this unity and diversity being reflected in all aspects of church life. As we pray for God's kingdom to come, we seek to join with others to work boldly for racial justice.

We recognise that this is a spiritual battle in which we are first, and always, called to our knees in prayer.

Three-Year Plan 2023-2025

What fruit do we want to see?

1. Theological confidence and prayerful grounding in God's vision and plan for a multi-ethnic family.
2. Deeper relationships in our church community
3. Wider doors to welcome everyone
4. Diversity and representation throughout church leadership
5. Speaking and acting in the wider community to promote God's kingdom vision of racial justice

1. Theological confidence and prayerful grounding in God's vision and plan for a multi-ethnic family.

We are committed to praying, learning and growing together in discipleship and in our theological confidence in God's plan for a multi-ethnic family. This will include broadening the voices that we hear that contribute to our theological growth.

Strategies

a. Root All Saints work of diversity and inclusion in prayer

Recognising that these are spiritual fruit, the RDB group is committed to covering and undergirding this work in prayer, leading the church in seeking God's transforming work among and through us, and in the community and world beyond us.

b. Develop an integrated teaching approach on racial justice

A strong theological foundation will give confidence in God's plan for racial justice and diversity, and the experience of deepening our theology can also be part of this experience. The RDB will offer support in the sourcing and developing of teaching and learning materials (sermons, small group studies, recommended materials, youth and children's materials), which will include a mixture of theology, history, experience and practical sessions including: God's vision for racial justice, diversity and inclusion; God's mission; intercultural church; understanding people's backgrounds and experiences of racism; unconscious bias; cultural competence; microaggressions and stereotyped thinking about ethnic groups .

c. Invite diverse preachers / speakers who will broaden our theological perspective

We are committed to deepening our relationship with God and our understanding of his mission on earth, including his heart for unity and for racial justice. There are many others who have the same beliefs and vision, who can enrich our faith through different experiences, perspectives and challenges.

Other strategies could include:

- Seminars on Black theology, Black ecclesial theology and other theological methods in approaching the Bible that draw from liberation themes and God's collective salvation story for his people.

- Encourage learning groups and promote materials (such as the website page with some suggested materials) to the congregation to widen our theological understanding.

2. Deeper relationships in our church community

We are committed to breaking barriers and crossing boundaries to enable deeper relationships of love across diverse ethnic groups within All Saints. As a whole congregation we want to understand, stand in solidarity with and address the experiences of racism and exclusion by our brothers and sisters in Christ from minority ethnic groups, whether experienced outside or inside of the church community.

Strategies

a. Promote greater participation in more diverse, inclusive small groups.

Small groups are places where people are built up in our belonging, believing and becoming more like Jesus. These groups give an opportunity for our love to abound more and more in depth of knowledge (Philippians 1.9), including understanding of other's experiences, whatever the colour of our skin. Our vision is to see more of our congregation in small groups (aiming up to 90%) and for these groups to increasingly reflect the diversity of the church in their make-up and function (e.g. different approaches and styles, including short term, daytime, evening, etc, etc). This will involve addressing barriers to participation, based on timings, location and culture.

b. Annual public recommitment to be a church that promotes racial diversity and belonging

This gives a focussed opportunity for the church to come together in ardent prayer and public commitment to God's ultimate vision for all nations, tribes, peoples and languages to be united in worship around his throne. This could take a different form each year, including repentance, laments, sharing hopes and dreams and could link to events in the church calendar such as Racial Justice Sunday in mid February each year.

Other strategies could include:

- Social events that celebrate cultural diversity and include and promote leadership from under-represented members of the congregation
- Sharing testimonies and stories in church services.

3. Wider doors to welcome everyone

We are committed to having wide doors so that everyone experiences the welcome of Jesus at All Saints. This is for those who are currently in our church family, as well as for anyone who has felt that All Saints is not a place they can feel welcome or at home in a way that encourages them to explore faith in Jesus.

Strategies

a. Develop a culture of welcome that covers people's whole experience at All Saints

Welcome doesn't start and end with the welcome team, but is the responsibility of everyone at All Saints. We will develop an approach to welcome that covers the whole experience with All Saints and includes the whole congregation.

b. Enriched and deeper experience of collective worship

Sunday services are the key collective act of worship of All Saints, and there are also other times we come together as a congregation, like Tuesday services, worship and prayer nights. Guided by the Holy Spirit and with the input of the church community, we will seek to enrich and deepen our experience of collective worship in Sunday services, drawing on wide cultural and historical expressions of faith (e.g. continue with Bible readings and prayers in different languages; seek imagery, stories, songs, and testimonies from a wide selection of sources)

Other strategies could include:

- Annual survey of people's experience of inclusion and belonging in the church, including a chance to input into plans and strategies (see King's Church example).

4. Diversity and representation throughout church leadership.

We are committed to a multi-ethnic leadership team to spread the good news of God's love in Peckham and beyond. This leadership is multi-faceted and will include clergy and staff members, PCC, ministry leads, prayer, worship, preaching, childrens and youth leaders, homegroup leaders. welcome.

Strategies

a. Develop new leaders from under-represented groups.

God is raising up new leaders in All Saints and we want to support this through developing a programme for new preachers, PCC members, small group leaders, childrens and youth leaders, or other key leadership roles, from under-represented backgrounds who may not yet feel confident about leading/contributing

b. Promote diversity in recruitment processes

To develop greater diversity in staff and leadership roles, we will ensure recruitment for new staff roles to build on recent approaches to actively encourage applicants from under-represented groups, e.g. through language, job specifications, where / how posts are advertised.

c. Support / training for leaders (staff, PCC, ministry leads) on diversity and inclusion

Leadership is a continuous process of learning and unlearning, of growing in relationship with God, in wisdom and in skills. Leaders will seek out training, support and guidance on issues such as promoting diversity and inclusion; collaborative leadership; addressing unconscious bias and understanding microaggressions, developing objectives and work plans around diversity and inclusion.

Other strategies could include:

- Annual audit of diversity in ministry participation and leadership
- Mentor programme for potential new PCC members from underrepresented groups
- Reverse mentoring for current leadership

5. Speaking and acting in the wider community to promote God's kingdom vision for racial justice:

We are committed to speaking out prophetically and engaging practically in networking in Peckham and beyond to support issues of local concern including of racial justice.

Strategies

a. **Support local groups working for justice and inclusion**

All Saints is connected to many local groups working for justice and inclusion, such as Peckham Citizens, XLP, Power the Fight, PECAN. We will continue to support these groups and develop a strategy to make them more visible and integrated into the congregational life of the church, including chances for greater participation from congregational members in their ministries.

b. **Respond publicly and in a culturally sensitive way as church leadership to relevant local events and issues,**

Events happen locally and nationally which will highlight the ongoing racial justice in our society. As a church we are called to speak out against injustice and in favour of God's vision for his world. We will seek to respond where most appropriate, for example through statements, social media, reaching out to those affected by violence, inclusion in prayers and teaching.

Other strategies could include:

- Ensure outreach is culturally competent and sensitive.
- Explore detached youth work.

Suggested Priority Actions in the next 6 months

- Mobilise the church in prayer for diversity and inclusion, including participation within monthly prayer meeting - (part of objective 1)- Eian to support
- Annual public recommitment to be a church that promotes racial diversity and belonging - Sunday January 22nd (objective 2) - Jenny (sermon), Hermione (lead), June/Eian (present key areas)
- Promote greater participation in more diverse, inclusive small groups - start to explore in more depth how to make groups more diverse and inclusive (objective 2) -Mike to support
- Support development of diverse and inclusive welcome approach - following up with welcome team after November workshop (objective 3) - Hermione, Enuma to support
- Develop new leaders from under-represented groups - specifically support new preachers in Spring-term teaching programmes (objective 4) - Graham to support