

Reconciled.

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CHRIST

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Jesus' purpose "was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross by which he put to death their hostility" Ephesians 2:15-16

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Introduction.

As Christ followers, we are called to minister and make room for all people within the church. Throughout the Bible, there are numerous scriptures that identify the church as a community where all people can gather together in prayer and worship to the Lord. In Isaiah 56 the Lord declares that his “house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.” Revelations 7:9 paints a beautiful picture of every nation, tribe and tongue worshipping the Lord together. In Romans 12:5, Paul proclaims the truth that though we are many, we are unified in Christ. The list goes on. But ultimately, as Scripture highlights, God has created each of us uniquely and equally in his image and likeness (Genesis 1:27) with an ordained value and worth preserved and fortified by the blood of Jesus Christ (Ephesians 1:4-5), who not only dwells in each of us by the power of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 3:16-17) but reconciles us to the Father and to each other (Ephesians 2:15-16).

This is the truth. There is no debating it. Christ is our peace, dying so that we might be one with the Father and with each other, Jew and Gentile (Ephesians 2:15-16; Galatians 3:27).

Yet nations, communities and churches continue to be divided based on race and ethnicity, with groups rarely crossing paths or communing in true fellowship individually and corporately.

In the UK, a black person is 9 times more likely to get ‘stopped & searched’ by the police than a white person¹. Hate crimes against East and South East Asians in the UK have increased by over 50% in the last two years². Within the church only 8.9% of stipendiary

¹UK Government, Stop and Search, [Ethnicity Facts and Figures](#)

²EVRESEA (End Violence and Racism against East and South East Asian Communities), [Hate Crime Data](#)

clergy ordained in 2020 were from a UK Minority Ethnic (UKME) background³, and the Archbishop of Canterbury has launched an anti-racism taskforce in 2020⁴, after lamenting of, and speaking on the deep institutional racism within the Church of England⁵.

Beyond the UK, slavery, ethnic genocides, and other forms of racial oppression continue to impact millions of people. In 2020, global cries of racial injustice came to a fever pitch when George Floyd was murdered by a police officer in Minneapolis on 25 May. For many, this was a moment of awakening, showing in broad daylight the racial prejudice and injustice that daily impacts some of our brothers and sisters in Christ. This is not just an American issue. In the UK, Black Britons account for 8% of deaths in custody of the state. This is 2-3x overrepresented in comparison to all other ethnicities, relative to the U.K. population⁶. Statistics across several life dimensions paint the stark picture of racial injustice in the UK and across the globe.

At St Aldates, this sparked an ongoing discussion on race. Members of the senior leadership held 'Time to Listen' sessions, where members of the church from different ethnic backgrounds shared their experiences of racism within the UK and in the church. Their heart-breaking stories of prejudice, exclusion, invisibility, and underrepresentation called each of us to ask whether our hearts were open to anyone who would come through the church's open doors. In Autumn 2020, we gathered in person and on zoom to listen further to the community. One of the key takeaways was that there was deep hunger within our community for racial justice to be in the bloodstream of St Aldates. From the pews to the pulpit, we hoped to see this key issue integrated into our everyday practice such that all people regardless of background might feel included and at home within our church community.

From these conversations, the Race, Faith and Justice Committee was established in 2020 to provide a focal point and catalyst that enables the church to celebrate racial diversity and respond to issues of racial injustice. This small group resource is one of the materials produced by the team to encourage earnest conversation about the topic of racial justice.

³ Church of England Research & Statistics, [Ministry Statistics 2020 Report](#)

⁴ The Church of England, [Anti-Racism Taskforce](#)

⁵ BBC News, ['Church of England is 'deeply institutionally racist' - Welby'](#)

⁶ Independent Office for Police Conduct, [Deaths during or following police contact: Statistics for England and Wales](#)

During the course of six-weeks, we will unpack and reflect upon the biblical foundations for racial justice, unity, and equality. The first half of the study will generally explore the Lord's heart for diversity, and the diversity of experiences his people face. The second half of the resource will explore how the nations once at odds are reconciled, unified and brought justice through Christ. Each session invites each of us to consider God's heart for his people in a thorough study of Scripture from both the Old and New Testament. You will be invited to reflect upon his love, justice and mercy and will be given a chance to pray and discuss our individual and corporate response to the topic. As you go through each session, pray that God might reveal his heart to you and your group as you meditate on his Word. We hope that this guide will inspire and encourage you.

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IN GROUPS

Before you start this study, in groups consider the following:

Why do you wish to engage with this course? What do you hope to get out of it?