

The Archbishops' Commission for Racial Justice has released the second of its biannual Racial Justice reports.

Mandated to drive 'significant cultural and structural change on issues of racial justice within the Church of England', the Archbishops' Commission for Racial Justice ("ACRJ"), headed by The Rt Hon Lord Paul Boateng, is charged with monitoring, holding to account and supporting the implementation of the forty-seven recommendations of the Archbishops' Anti-Racism Taskforce which were laid out in the Taskforce's comprehensive 2021 report From Lament to Action.

In his foreword letter to the Second Report, Lord Boateng singles out for praise the Church Commissioners for their "ground-breaking work" in the forensic audit undertaken on Queen Anne's Bounty and its links with transatlantic chattel slavery. The Commission welcomes the £100 million of funding to deliver a programme of investment, research and engagement over the next nine years, but caveats that there is much further work to be done as this is "not the end of the story" [Slavery, p 23].

Lord Boateng welcomes the arrival in December 2022 of the Director of the Racial Justice Unit, but expresses continued disappointment at the time it has taken to establish the Unit and comments: "This has inevitably impacted negatively upon our own work and on the progress made across the Church of England in delivering on the recommendations of From Lament to Action".

The Second Report draws particular attention to the witness heard from representatives of the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller Christians about the "indifference, neglect and outright hostility" at the hands of both church and state. General Synod in 2019 urged dioceses to establish a chaplain to the communities. The Commission heard that twelve such chaplains have been appointed and calls for the remaining dioceses to do likewise in ensuring the GRT community receives pastoral, advocacy and educational activities. On the latter, the Church of England's "Leaders like us" programme will have a part to play and the programme will be scrutinized by the Commission over the course of its work [Process and Engagement, p 11].

Commenting on the Second Report, the Archbishop of Canterbury said: "I am encouraged that some progress has been made, particularly in the establishment of a fully-functioning Racial Justice Unit, but there is clearly more to be done. I continue to be very grateful to Lord Boateng and the members of the Commission for Racial Justice for the essential and demanding work they are doing and will pray for them."

Adding his thanks for the Second Report, the Archbishop of York said: "I remain saddened that the issue of racial justice has to be one of constant vigilance and questioning. The Commission's work is vital if we are to transform the nature of our ministry and witness."

Notes

The Commission reports to the Archbishops every six months with recommendations to help the Archbishops fulfil their commitments to identify, respond to, and root out systemic racism in the Church.

The full membership of the Archbishops Commission for Racial Justice includes:

Chair: The Rt Hon Lord Boateng, Former Cabinet Minister and High Commissioner to South Africa

Professor Anthony Reddie, Department of Theology, University of Oxford

The Revd Canon Dr Chigor Chike, Former Chair, Anglican Minority Ethnic Network (AMEN); Vicar, Forest Gate (Emmanuel with St Peter) Upton Cross, Chelmsford Diocese

Professor Duncan Morrow, Department of Politics, Ulster University

Dame Melanie Dawes, Chief Executive, Ofcom

Professor Mike Higton, Department of Theology, Durham University

Lord Wei of Shoreditch, Serial Social Entrepreneur and Social Reformer

Dr Nirmala Pillay, School of Law, Leeds Beckett University

The Revd Canon Patricia Hillas, Chaplain to the Speaker of the House of Commons

The Revd Canon Dr Philip Anderson, Canon Precentor, Liverpool Cathedral

The Rt Revd Rose Hudson-Wilkin, Bishop of Dover

The Revd Sonia Barron, Diocesan Director of Vocations, Diocese of Lincoln

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