

The Church of England must adopt a “strong strategy” to tackle racial inequality in the face of the “scandal” of its failure to implement recommendations made over the years on racial justice, the General Synod heard today.



Lord Boateng, Chair of the Archbishops’ Commission on Racial Justice, told General Synod members that it was “chilling”, “wounding” and a “scandal” that there had been no action on a “long list” of recommendations over the years to tackle racial injustice.

There is “no shortage of policy” or good intentions in the Church of England, he said, but there is a “shortage of delivery”. Racism is a “gaping wound in the body of Christ,” he said.

Paying tribute to the work of the Church of England’s Anti-Racism Taskforce, he said its report *From Lament to Action*, published last year, revealed a “chilling” failure by the Church to implement recommendations made over the years on racial justice.

“The most chilling thing about this report, the most concerning thing about this report, are the appendices, the long lists of previous recommendations which have not been implemented, promises made that have not been fulfilled. It is chilling, it is wounding, it is a scandal, and it has to be addressed,” he said.

Addressing the problem would require “intentionality” and resources, he said.

“Above all, it will require each and every one of you to embrace it, each and every one of you to see that in every parish and in every diocese there is a strategy.

Sentiment is not enough, we have to have a strategy, love, not as a soft sentiment but as a strong strategy,” he continued.

The 11-strong Commission set up by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, began work in October making recommendations to help the Archbishops fulfil their commitments to identify, respond to, and root out systemic racism in the Church. It is due to publish its first interim report in May.

Lord Boateng added: "We seek justice, in this instance racial justice and it is a journey you have already been on for some time. It is not easy, it is not comfortable, at times it is very uncomfortable."

The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, introducing Lord Boateng to the Synod, said racial justice was a "critical issue for the life of the church, the life of the nation and the life of the world."

He told the Synod: "Sometimes, the Church's opposition to racism, particularly in our own day, is dismissed as some sort of inappropriate dallying with race politics and culture wars."

"Not so! Not so!"

"We make our stand on Christian doctrine, particularly on what we learn about ourselves through the revelation of God in Jesus Christ."

Lord Boateng received a standing ovation from General Synod members, with Archbishop Stephen paying tribute to his "challenging, prophetic and sometimes deeply uncomfortable presentation"

Archbishop Stephen said: "The reason Archbishop Justin and I have commissioned this work is because of what we believe about Christ and what it is to be a Christ-centred Church, to make it clear that there can be no racism in the Church, and that we must now face up to the failings of the past and change our future: for ourselves but also for the world Christ came to save."

Notes to editors

- The Commission has already visited the Dioceses of London, York and Bristol as part of its work and has visits to Manchester, Liverpool and Truro dioceses scheduled over the coming months.

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