

Come as we are: re-visioning the landscape of BAME involvement and representation in the Church of England

Summary and background

A key desired outcome of Renewal & Reform is for the Church of England to become a Church open to and for everyone. This is done by building up the body of Christ through equipping new generations of leaders and disciples that are truly representative of the nation which we serve. In this essay, the Revd Dr Sharon Prentis argues the current political circumstances 'can be a foundation upon which to build hope' and that 'as the beloved community of saints we are called to reflect relationships which move beyond stereotypes to build authentic community.'

Dr Prentis reviews the failings of the Church in recognising key barriers to greater inclusion of BAME people within the church, with a particular emphasis on unconscious bias, the inclination to favour what is more like us. A lack of progress in breaking down these barriers over the past 30 years, 'points to a need to develop more critical dialogue and theology about the chasm concerning what is believed, said and actualised', writes Dr Prentis. Cultural assumptions do not reflect the diversity of society and minority-ethnic Anglicans have their identities subsumed by the gravitation towards uniformity, Dr Prentis argues, calling for the church 'to stand together against injustice and to express prophetic grief and to act when confronted with it.'

If the Church is to be truly representative, says Dr Prentis, then a renewed vision of identity is needed that reflects the generous hospitality of God, a diverse Church being an expression of Christ-focused relationship which reflects current reality.

This theological piece underpins the structural changes that are taking place within the Church to enable greater inclusion in all areas of minority ethnic Anglicans. From appointing our first National Minority Ethnic Vocations Officer, the consecration of the new Bishop of Woolwich, Woyin Karowei Dorgu, the extension of ecumenical regulations to allow greater collaboration with network churches often BAME in character, to the creation of a new See in Leicester Diocese in order to transform community relationships, Renewal and Reform and the wider Church are clearing the way for a transformed community that acts as the agent of God's transforming presence in the world. Anna McCrum, Senior Media Officer

Revd Dr Sharon Prentis

Revd Dr Sharon Prentis, Beginning Theology Course Coordinator & Tutor, St Mellitus College and Associate Priest, St John's Seven Kings, Ilford.

"Love all of God's creation, the whole and every grain of sand of it. Love every leaf, every ray of God's light. Love the animals, love the plants, love everything.

"If you love everything, you will perceive the divine mystery in things. Once you perceive it, you will begin to comprehend it better every day. And you will come at last to love the whole world with an all-embracing love." Fyodor Dostoyevsky, The Brothers Karamazov

“Give me a song of faith
And a people to believe in it.
Give me a song of kindliness
And a country where I can live it.
Give me a song of hope and love
And a brown girl’s heart to hear it.”

Pauli Murray

Growing up in the urban environment of a sprawling industrial Northern city during the 1970’s, my neighbours were from an assortment of backgrounds: Asian, Caribbean, Eastern European, English, Irish, Jewish. The experience of living among a variety of cultures was wonderful. Sharing food, festivals, family stories, fun and faith was part of the day to day experience of living in community.

While being in such a diverse environment was exciting, we also shared the experiences and the challenges of living together, coming of age and finding where we belonged in this society. It was simultaneously messy, frustrating and glorious, but I learnt a lot about myself and God in relation to others. Since that time, the composition of British society has further diversified and some may even say, become more fragmented. For many, issues of belonging have not diminished. We are no longer just an island of regional people groups with a few from the former British colonies. The UK population now reflects significant numbers who have originated from elsewhere in addition to those, born here, whose parents came to Britain following the Second World War.

The most recent census shows a rise in people from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds; while the numbers make up only around 14% of the total British population, this statistic varies considerably around the country where cities who have experienced the most growth have larger populations.

“The Church as the prophetic voice of hope is called to speak.”

For example, 35% of London's residents are classified as minority ethnic with around 270 nationalities and over 300 languages[1]. At the same time, wider social narratives around presence, participation and belonging has become more pronounced. Previous notions around migration, globalisation and nationality, shaped by the civil rights and equality movements, are now being challenged. Awareness of national, cultural, ethnic and religious distinctiveness have become heightened resulting in the hardening of attitudes toward refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, and those of second or third generation immigrants. Added to that, populist views have shaped politics, which has led to a highly contentious debate around citizenship and identity. The reporting of hate crimes has risen by a staggering 42% following the Brexit referendum,[2] and for the first time in a generation, there is a palpable sense by some minority ethnic communities of not being accepted. Against this backdrop of social and political reconfiguration, the Church as the prophetic voice of hope is called to speak.

The Christian community witnesses to God's truth by living it out. However, the Church is not immune from prevailing social attitudes. For us to speak and act credibly in the current social climate requires honest self-appraisal and searching questions:

Do we strive to be as diverse as the communities we are in?

Are we open to receiving the gifts that God has given to the Church through diverse Christians?

What is the work of healing, reconciliation and transformation required to be the whole people of God?

Does our theology contend for the fellowship of all believers?

What insights can be drawn from the New Testament believers who were from different social groups and areas of the Roman Empire?

How can we convincingly speak about God's transformation without being transformed ourselves?

My intention in this article is to challenge the assumptions that a culturally and ethnically monochrome or homogeneous church is the norm, and to show that this is contrary to the experiences of the church in the New Testament. Moreover, that wherever possible, we should strive to be a multi-ethnic church as a reflection of the gospel of Christ; and that the dominance of a particular group, race and class throughout the structures of the institution excludes others and perpetuates the lack of representation.

There has been a twenty year gap between consecrations of bishops from an ethnic minority background. Furthermore, theological consideration is rarely applied to how the church embraces diversity, nor how the dynamics of diversification impact the Church. I am conscious that this piece asks more questions than it answers, but they are questions to help guide a long over due and much-needed wider discussion. I contend that the issue requires an acknowledgment of unconscious bias and the institutional barriers that maintain and perpetuate division. This acknowledgement then requires action in order to fulfil the mission Christ has entrusted to us.

Unconscious Bias- the inclination to favour what is most like us

In order to try to answer these questions it is important for us to acknowledge those things that allow for the continued lack of comprehensive representation. The term 'unconscious bias' has gained recent prominence in explaining an inclination to perpetuate the status quo. Biases are formed by assumptions about people and situations that are influenced by culture, social background and personal experiences. They can range from a preference for a group or experience, to gross stereotyping and vilification, underpinned by an ethnocentrism and judging of another culture by a particular standard or perspective[3]. This may also result in avoidance or minimal participation by those whose experiences or perceptions have been negative.

"The overwhelming message is that God's act of justification in Christ is for all"

Paul writing to a heterogeneous congregation reminds those in Rome that God's grace is for both Jews and Gentiles (Rom 1-3). By doing so, he challenges ethnocentrism in the early church by warning them against arrogance and ethnic pride, exhorting them to live together

in Christian unity (Rom 2:17–29; Rom 11:17–24). The overwhelming message is that God's act of justification in Christ is for all, both Jews and Gentiles and that he works through human beings to distribute his gifts for the benefit of creation. That awareness is still relevant.

Ethnicity & The Anglican Church

The reluctance to debate the obvious disparities within the Anglican church, from its leadership and governance structures through to its congregations and clergy, has been the proverbial 'elephant in the room'. BAME presence in the Church falls far short of what it should be given the general population. The 2014 Everyone Counts Diversity Survey, which monitors representation in the Church of England recorded minority ethnic participation in parish and deanery structures as: 4% of church council members, 6% of deanery synod members and 6% of churchwardens. The last survey of clergy ethnicity covering the period 2012-15 recorded clergy representation as marginally increasing from 3.0% to 3.4%. Over the past few years there has been a disconcerting silence about the institutional barriers which perpetuate the disparity, and more importantly how we might remedy the current situation by promoting reconciliation and fairer representation.

The lack of progress is not just wholly inadequate but incompatible with the gospel. Nearly 20 years ago, the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry and subsequent Macpherson Report first highlighted, "the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin... seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people." [4] An example of institutional racism would concern an organisation that consistently refuses to consider matters of race equality on the basis that it is not an issue, and takes no action to promote race equality or address racism. At the time, Macpherson was crucial in challenging complacency in the Metropolitan Police. Consequently, police forces changed to be more representative. Although the Church is not the Met, it should be conceded that nearly two decades after Macpherson, the Anglican Church's own measures to affect a more representative church have not yielded much success. Furthermore, from the perspective of many, especially of black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) Christians, the lack of progress is not just wholly inadequate but incompatible with the gospel.

A recent North American survey found that Sunday morning church services were one of the most ethnically segregated hours of the week [5]. Even more astonishing was the belief by a significant number of survey respondents that this was acceptable state of affairs. Similar attitudinal British data may not be available, but I suspect it would not be that different. Information suggests that while there are some diverse congregations, our leadership and governance structures tend to reflect the one group- who are predominantly white, middle class and largely male. This calls into question the nature of transformative faith. A transformed community is exemplified by being aware of each other, working together and having fellowship as a response of living in God's light (1John 1:6-7). Such an awareness is exemplified by righteousness, justice and fairness that is not only articulated but lived.

A number of initiatives such as the Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns and 'Turn Up The Volume' have been thwarted in their attempts to address the issues. The lack of progress over the past 30 years points to a need to develop more critical dialogue and theology about the chasm concerning what is believed, said and actualised. We need a dialogue about our lived experiences, how church structures and cultures play into prevailing stereotypes and more importantly how to act justly and love mercy. Acknowledging that we too can be complicit through our structures and processes is part of the process of repentance, reconciliation and redress. Literature about multi-ethnic churches suggests that where this is an explicit value there is corresponding action and an impact on promoting inclusive religious communities. As Mark DeYmaz, contends the multi-ethnic church, like that in the New Testament, is effective evidence of the gospel at this point in history[6].

In the New Testament, Christ's redemptive work is shown in the establishment of local churches that crossed gender, age, ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic, and linguistic boundaries. In Acts, the heterogeneous nature of the early church and leadership in the church began at Pentecost with Peter quoting from the prophet Joel:

"And it will be in the last days," says God, "that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters will prophesy; your youth will see visions and your seniors will dream dreams. Even on both my male servants [ministers] and on my female servants [ministers], in those days, I will pour out my Spirit and they will prophesy. Acts 2:17-18. Subsequently, the diverse nature of the church was reflected by those in leadership and included women Prisca (Priscilla), Euodia and Syntche, Lucian a former Gentile, Barnabas a former Levite, Manaean a member of the court of Herod and Simeon called Niger who was described as dark-skinned.

Paul's letter to the diverse church at Corinth advocates both social and spiritual unity as a witness of being sanctified in Christ Jesus (1 Corinth 1: 10; 12: 4-6). The culturally diverse believers in Corinth are reminded of their common salvation in their pluralism: God working in different ways in different people (1 Corinth 12: 3-7).

"In an increasingly fragmented society, the acceptance and celebration of our distinctive communities within the church is a sign of hope"

If at its inception there was variety in the church, it is even more crucial how it lives out and proclaims the Gospel in an ethnically diverse society. To fully reflect the kingdom of God as a diverse, vibrant and representative church requires humility and honest introspection:

How do we affirm the variety of cultural expressions found within the Church?

In what ways do we encourage and utilise the diverse gifts that belong to the body of Christ?

What are the implications for ministry in a diverse society in the way we carry out mission, disciple people, the way we worship, educate and appoint leaders?

The answers to these questions influence our communal life together. In an increasingly fragmented society, the acceptance and celebration of our distinctive communities within

the church is a sign of hope, both now and in the future. In serving God we serve one another, so full participation becomes the task of all believers. To be mindful of this endeavour, not only affirms the communities within the Anglican Church, but is evidence of our unity in diversity.

The challenge becomes even more dramatic for the task of mission. A multi-ethnic church challenges us to face those things we would rather not: our propensity to favour those most like ourselves to the exclusion of others. If we are to be effective in mission, develop a diverse discipleship and increase vocations to the ordained ministry and challenge the systems that perpetuate injustice, then the Church must become a place where all Anglicans can flourish. Furthermore, courage is needed to identify the tendency towards ethnocentrism (those ways of being that favour some above others) while simultaneously challenging the norms, expectations and practices that exclude others.

Transformation rather than conformity

Previous efforts by the church to redress present day inequalities have been largely unsuccessful. Influences such as social conformity can result in the same group of people doing the same things further perpetuating the same culture. What is established by one group means that those wanting to join should adopt the features of that culture to be accepted. Individuals are required to fit a set of cultural norms that reinforces and upholds one particular way of being and structure. Instead, Christ calls for transformation, an inside out process that is dependent on the Holy Spirit. Engagement with others then flows from a recognition that the liturgy, iconography and leadership all reflect the diverse community of saints and attest to a church that acknowledges their existence.

Is it any wonder that the current perception of minority-ethnic Anglicans is that we have to culturally accommodate to ways of being church. We are confronted by images and liturgies that do not reflect diversity, nor values or embraces our experiences. For example, our faith stories and experiences about culture, identity, migration, asylum and the relationship to discipleship and the sense of vocation are rarely heard. The result is the unwitting, subconscious and conscious practices that exclude and which also contradict the generous hospitality of God. Cultural conformity becomes the predominant expectation. Identities become subsumed as we deny that uniqueness and diversity is part of God's gift in creation. Such generosity is from the invitation to participate and evidenced by unity not uniformity. Yet, the human proclivity is to gravitate towards those most like ourselves, our own image and nature. A factor is the lack of meaningful interaction with others from different backgrounds, which results in a partial understanding of what it means to be in communion with another. Associated with that is a need to acknowledge that privilege is identifiable with a certain class, status and cultural groups. Developing awareness around what it means to belong and also what it is to be excluded allows the repentance that is pre-requisite for effective change to occur. As Richard Rohr observes, 'reconciliation and redemptive healing must descend into the unconsciousness where they are hidden in our wounds'[7]. As people of faith we are called to stand together against injustice and to express prophetic grief and to act when confronted with it. Standing alongside others in love, humility, and solidarity is the evidence of our commitment to Christ.

Embodying the values of the kingdom here and now

The early church in Acts 2: 41- 47 serves as an example of a movement based on bridging the differences that involved the Jewish diaspora and the Gentiles. Writing to diverse followers of the faith Paul addresses the New Testament church encouraging them to live together in love for the sake of the gospel and to sacrifice their own preferences for the sake of others (Rom 13:8–10; 14:1–23). They were also exhorted to live as one community in Christ and show no partiality (1 Cor 7:17–24; Phlm 8–16; Jas 2:1–9; 1 Tim 4:12; 5:1–16; Titus 2:1–8; 1 John 2:12–14).

A conspicuous absence of BAME people at all levels of the church is contrary to God's invitation to participate.

If the Church is to be truly representative, then we need a renewed vision of who we are. Part of the process is a theologically critical analysis of the underlying premises concerning who constitutes the Church and those called to lead, teach and serve. Without such an intentional examination of norms and expectations the replication of biases are inevitable. Under-representation questions the generous hospitality of God. A conspicuous absence of BAME people at all levels of the church is contrary to God's invitation to participate. The 'otherness' of difference is surpassed by the 'oneness' to unity that is shared in Jesus Christ. However, unity does not mean uniformity. While assumptions about participation and involvement remain hidden and unchallenged inequality takes roots and breeds division within the body of Christ. If we are to become a church that fully reflects our various communities of the faith then these assumptions will need to be challenged and our behaviours and practices re-framed, as in the New Testament church. Until we understand this we are inclined to maintain what is comfortable and familiar, calling into question the transformative power of God. If we are to equip the whole people of God to share what it is to follow Christ with their neighbour, we need a relational foundation to embrace and celebrate 'otherness' and its transformative implications for the theological, social and political areas of life.

Repentance from ethnic, cultural and racial pride results in healing, reconciliation and restoration. There are several examples in the Gospels where Jesus challenges 'otherness' as seen in ethnic bias: when he affirms the Centurion's faith (Matt 8:5–13), the healing of the Syrophenician's daughter (Mark 7:26), the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:33), the healing of the ten lepers, of whom only the foreigner returned to give thanks (Luke 17:16). Transformation is characterised by repentance, forgiveness and a change of attitude and behaviour. Words become translated into transformative action. We then are able to live by the greatest principle to love others as we ourselves are loved.

Developing a passion for what is possible

Christ's redeeming love for humanity points to the fact that every life made in God's image is sacred. A diverse church is an expression of Christ-focused relationships which reflect the kingdom of God as a present and future reality. Christ's reign is not a future 'maybe' but an 'already has begun' present. To enact the values of God's kingdom entails radical action that confounds the present reality. The hope offered is not only the redemption of past

experiences but an invitation to new ones; the aim is not to eliminate the reality that exists, but to have the courage to view it from an eternal perspective to explore any number of possibilities in God. As a result, we work together despite the obstacles to achieve God's purposes for his church, and press further into the creative power of hope. The corporate enterprise of Renewal and Reform will inevitably concern both redemptive and reconciliatory elements as we acknowledge the things that separate us.

By listening to each other, theology becomes both an individual task and a communal endeavour that aims for full liberation from our biases and their repercussions. The collective narrative of the body of Christ is part of the mission endeavour. God's story is linked to all our stories through the resurrection hope found in Christ. For BAME congregants telling stories about faith and lived experience becomes part of the narrative of hope that counters the biases encountered. The proverbial wisdom that is offered becomes part of the resurrection narrative: a narrative that is shared. Intentional dialogue becomes a means of mutual liberation and healing, a way to make sense of present circumstances, and a means of having things in common. From this the desire for collective action that anticipates a better outcome for all becomes the goal. By listening to each other, theology becomes both an individual task and a communal endeavour that aims for full liberation from our biases and their repercussions. When we are liberated, we recognise the need to share ourselves and our stories with each other. We also recognise our need to receive the same from others. From the Christian perspective, we see life as a gift worth sharing with one another. To those who have experienced injustice, resurrection hope is central to the belief that transformation is possible. This revelation underpins an ongoing realisation of kingdom values, as all who are affected are healed and reconciled in Christ.

Writing about hope as a resource Gabriel Daly suggests that the theology of the church suffers from a credibility gap because our ecclesiology is reflected by who we are[8]. For me this translates into how we practice what we preach. On the one hand, we are unified in God through Christ; on the other hand there is a denial that our respective lived realities are very different. The lack of visibility of minority ethnic Anglicans in organisational structures amounts to a denial of the gifts we bring, which further reinforces division. For a significant number, it reinforces tacit notions that people from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds lack the ability to participate at all levels of the church. Meaningful engagement becomes difficult because it is always framed in terms of the experience of the majority, excluding the lived experiences of the minority.

The unifying love in the person of God should be reflected in the body of Christ, the Church, as we seek to serve one another. This becomes evident at all levels of Church as a full representation of the people of God. It is the best visible expression of our commitment to the purposes of God. Resurrection hope is both redemptive and transformative seeking to change the tendency towards self-serving conformity and turning us towards those things that pursue God's righteousness.

For the marginalised, the cross, the focus of hope, is a criticism of worldly power, inequality and its connotations. Additionally, the cross is a symbol of God's solidarity with those who suffer and are oppressed. Hope's perspective is then associated with liberation that provides a powerful vision of the future that opens the possibility of transformation. Hope's

proclamation of God is ultimately revolutionary. However, before we can combat the evil in the world and make a real difference, we must be changed ourselves[9]. Recognising always, that complete transformation and non-conformity to the world through the power of hope will not be achieved until the ultimate fruition of the kingdom of God.

In his deliberations about hope, Gabriel Daly questions whether it can survive church structures.[10] He argues that if hope is to have a substantive place in church institutional life it must have a strong sociopolitical dimension and therefore be concerned with equality, justice, righteousness and the redistribution of power. Furthermore, hope is easily extinguished where organisational judgements are made without consultation or communication with those it serves; where the institution overshadows the community and kingdom values become lost. I would also add that the understanding that wisdom is spiritually discerned and arises from the whole people of God is also lost.

Daly suggests that institutional structures and practices can obscure the vision of the kingdom causing a confusion of purpose and identity. Institutional life inevitably concerns power, communication and control in order to function effectively. However, an over emphasis of these functions means a preoccupation with maintenance, the continuity of the old culture and less emphasis on mission. The antidote to the inertia caused by the need to maintain familiar structures is to ever acknowledge the tendency towards sin that fuels our inclination towards self-actualised power rather than God's authority.

Encounter means relationship

Christ taught what it meant to live a life that encountered others on purpose. By genuinely seeking to be in relationship with others who are different we attempt to move beyond stereotypes and build an authentic community. How do we do that? We realise that we are not alone, that we are called to be in fellowship with each other, that our burdens and joys are linked. While Jesus did not speak about overthrowing the Roman Empire he did talk about the kingdom of God. He went out of his way to show solidarity with the poor, oppressed and marginalised. His intention was not to overthrow, but to establish God's righteousness. For in honouring God we must honour others because we are mutually dependent. We no longer become bystanders to factionalism, preferential treatment in our respective social groups, but become increasingly conscious of what separates so that we can challenge stereotypes and counter stereotypical information. It also means changing perceptions and relationship with out-group members and practically improving processes, policies & procedures. As a former Bishop of Durham observed:

“Unless we recognise our corporate and institutional bondage the church will be less of a place of freedom and more a place of bondage[11].” David Jenkins

Diversity consciousness requires a willingness not just to encounter the other but to relinquish positional power in order to serve. Acceptance reflects the generous hospitality of God. The early church was characterised by sharing all things in common and their devotion to one another. As a disparate community, their commitment resulted in love in action, a social and spiritual collective founded on interdependence and mutual respect and the recognition that people share a common life and identity in Christ reminiscent of that holiest of communities: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Diversity consciousness requires a willingness not just to encounter the other but to relinquish positional power in order to serve.

Authentic encounter is also based on vulnerability. Faith in Christ enables authentic fellowship that transcends social, economic, generational, gender and class divisions. Our shared experiences and faith stories are then interwoven into the life of being church together. There are many common aspects of being a follower of Christ; however, the disparate social and political experiences of black, Asian and ethnic peoples allow for a more holistic understanding of our church communities. The church is then able to speak with credibility to a changing society where the grand social narratives are disintegrating. If we are to uphold the transforming ideas of Christ, the incorporation and representation of the whole people of God is required. We should not be afraid to explore issues of under-representation, marginalisation and oppression from a biblical perspective and the implications for us in an increasingly polarised world, especially as Christ himself identifies with those on the margins. This may include providing a concrete means to challenge and support the transformation of social practices and structures at both congregational and organisational level. Such endeavours will help us all not just to contribute to the conversation, but also to participate in communal transformation.

What does acceptance look like? An Anglican Church that allows human flourishing for all by being deliberate in creating for all to participate and celebrates the whole of Christian experience; a context where the generous 'yes' to all in Jesus Christ is evident. Unity in our diversity is by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Re-visioning a transformed multi-ethnic church

As we walk together in the footsteps of Christ we exhibit the gratuitous love of God thereby announcing the Gospel by the very way we live together. Minority ethnic Anglicans cannot by themselves change the narrative of cultural assumptions, conscious and unconscious biases. A biblical vision of redemption concerns everyone. Scripture read in the shadow of post-colonial experience has implications for renewal in which "there is no longer Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free: but Christ is all and in all" (Colossians 3:11). All socially derived ethnic, religious, cultural, and economic divisions collapse in Christ. Instead, there arises a community of mutually interdependent believers who share all things in common: their lives and experiences as well as their possessions, as in the early church. Questions about meaning, belonging, significance, responsibility and identity are made explicit. True fellowship (Koinonia) with God and others occurs when the individual is seen in relation to the church community and the church community is seen in relation to the individual.

The current social and political circumstances can be the foundation upon which to build hope.

Embracing the possibility of a truly multi-ethnic and culturally heterogeneous church involves being orientated towards God with the world in mind. The current social and political circumstances have made the application of the theological imagination to race and religion even more imperative. Mission becomes not about exploring 'exotic' difference but

concerns the totality of sharing oneself with another. In other words, it is about relationships based on mutual respect, vulnerability and the willingness to forego power for the sake of the Gospel and others. That is the powerful attraction of a redeemed humanity, embodying kingdom values, working with the Spirit to shape the present. The Christian mandate to proclaim the good news of the Gospel as a people transformed by grace. Either we make an impact on the world around us or it continues to make an impact on us. Minority ethnic Anglicans seek to be active and not passive participants in a transformed church that acts as the agent of God's transforming presence in the world. Integral to this process is the value of unity over uniformity. Hierarchical institutional processes can emphasise the one over the other.

Crisis often precedes change. The current social and political circumstances can be the foundation upon which to build hope. Striving to achieve a representative, like any other endeavour, will be characterised by frustrations as well as successes. Nevertheless, attempts are tempered by grace and the certainty that it is God who calls. This is a Kairos moment. As the beloved community of saints we are called to reflect relationships which move beyond stereotypes to build authentic community. We cannot do this of ourselves. Inspired by the Spirit as we conscientiously include others the church itself becomes transformed. For without the visible witness of unity in Christ, mission efforts will fall short of kingdom values. It is only with a renewed vision of a representative church, based on authentic encounter and acceptance, that we can fulfil the mission Christ has entrusted to us.

Note: Scripture quotations are from the English Standard Version (ESV).

Footnotes

- [1] Salt, J. International Migration and the United Kingdom. Report of the United Kingdom SOPEMI correspondent to the OECD, Migration Research Unit, University College London.
- [2] National Police Chief Council. "Hate crime undermines the diversity and tolerance we should instead be celebrating." NPCC. Newsroom by PRgloo Ltd, 8 July 2016. Web. 30 Nov 2016.
- [3] Lee, Audrey J. "Unconscious bias theory in employment discrimination litigation." Harv. CR-CLL Rev. 40 (2005): 481.
- [4] Macpherson, W. (1999) The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry. Report of an Inquiry by Sir William Macpherson of Cluny, London: Stationery Office, Chapter 6, para. 6:34
- [5] Bob Smietana, "Church segregation views among church goers" Christianity Today. Christianity Today, 15 Jan 2015. Web. 30 Nov 2016.
- [6] Mark DeYmaz, Building a Healthy Multi-ethnic Church: Mandate, Commitments and Practices San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, 2007 p 144
- [7] Richard Rohr, (2008) Things Hidden: Scripture as Spirituality (Franciscan Media: 2008), 7-10
- [8] Gabriel Daly. (1995). Hope in the Church. In: Junker-Kenny Christian Resources of Hope. Minnesota: The Liturgic Dalyal Press. 39-54
- [9] Jürgen Moltmann, In the End the Beginning, SCM Press, London, 2004: 91
- [10] Gabriel Daly p. 45
- [11] David Jenkins, Still Living With Questions. London: SCM 1990 p 145