

**SOUTH BEDFORDSHIRE CIRCUIT
METHODIST CHURCH IN BRITAIN**

ALL-TOGETHER

A RACIAL JUSTICE STRATEGY FOR THE CHURCH



All-Together - A Racial Justice Strategy for SBC
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Supported by SBC's EDI (racial justice) group
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All-Together - A Racial Justice Strategy for the Church
South Bedfordshire Circuit
Methodist Church in Britain

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Peacemaking

When it is dark, provide light,
when people are distressed, talk to them softly,
when you see injustice, speak out;
when people are discriminated against,
challenge it!
When your neighbour is suffering,
offer support.
When all around you, indifference reigns, stand out.
Live, love, support, demonstrate.
Be a maker of peace.
(And so, I will be a maker of peace).

Ailsa Harris

Acknowledgements	3
PART ONE	5
1.1 Introduction	5
1.3 Assessing the situation	5
1.4 The Problem	6
2. The Authority	7
2.3 Mission Statement	7
2.4 Vision Statement	7
3. One-anothering	8
4. Justice	8
5. History	10
6. Theological Reflection - Mission and Person	10
6.3 Person	10
6.4 Mission	11
PART TWO	13
1. Policy - Ways of Being Worshipping and Working	13
2. Framework	13
3. Policy Proposals	14
PART THREE	16
1. Information Resource	16
2. Government Legislation	16
3. Glossary	17
4. Awareness-raising	20
5. Ideas for role and remit	21
6. Programme for progress	23
7. Where to start?	23
Appendix 1	25
Prayers	25

Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ (Philippians 2:3-5).

PART ONE

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Methodist Church in Britain has had a long history as an advocate for social justice. The recently published Inclusive Church Strategy by the Connexion reminds us that work on racial justice, came to the Conference of 1962, which upheld the Church's belief that "all are one in Christ Jesus."¹

1.2 This Strategy, which addresses ethnicity, specifically, but not exclusively, is built in part on the foundations of the Methodist Conference's consistent expressions of the abhorrence of racism, but rests primarily on current research findings of the South Bedfordshire Circuit (SBC) of the Methodist Church in Britain. The Strategy references British history, biblical theology, UK equality legislation, and the Inclusive Church process. The SBC acknowledges the biblical authority to live, work and worship in love and service to, and with, all peoples. The details outlined in the following pages cannot be read without a piercing recognition of the painful and disruptive nature of racial injustice, for all people. Part One includes governing principles, a synopsis of the problem, and historical and theological reflection. Part Two contains policy ideas and proposals. Part Three sets out useful information and essential tools for building equity, with ideas on where to begin. Immediately, a brief indication of the journey so far seems fitting.

1.3 Assessing the situation

1.3.1 The SBC commissioned research (2019) to explore the state of racial justice across the Circuit, focusing on, but not exclusive to, ethnic diversity (The full report entitled *Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion - Exploring the Issues* can be found at Appendix 1). This Strategy proposes new and/or improved pathways for conducting mission and ministry in an all-embracing, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural context; therefore, it requires the readers' full attention.

1.3.2 While reference is made throughout the Strategy to inequalities affecting black and brown people - African, Caribbean, Black British, Asian, or Asian British – the SBC acknowledges that similar issues also affect other ethnic groups² in general. The author has at length discussed this matter in a previous study.³ We have been mindful of similar complexities and the equal importance, for example, of the needs of Central or Eastern Europeans, Gypsies, Irish Travellers, Roma, Romanians, Jews, who resident in areas such as multi-ethnic, multi-cultural religiously diverse South Bedfordshire. Nevertheless, the complexities of language and ethnic classification remain.⁴

Language

1.3.3 We are faced, therefore, with a key linguistic concern: the absence of a generic term which respects all identity variations, and at the same time expresses complete inclusion of the people who are most susceptible as victims of racism. These include persons, who, because of their colour, ethnic or cultural heritage, have suffered inhuman and degrading treatment, bought, and sold as “commodities” by the transatlantic slave owners, or the victims of anti-black prejudice and inequality. In this Strategy, we have relied on terms in current usage such as “black and brown,” or “black and minority ethnic” which reflect a shared, lived experience that is central to the problem. Language, however, remains in flux and changeable.

1.4 The Problem

1.4.1 It would be naïve and neglectful for the SBC, or indeed any person or organisation, to think that racism no longer exists, and that the problem does not affect the Church. On the contrary, the SBC and the church in general are aware of the impact of ethnicity-based barriers.⁵ While not the best measure of progress, black and brown people are still not recruited by the church to senior representative roles, proportionately even, where opportunities exist; some firms continue to discriminate in recruitment on the basis of applicants’ names.⁶ Devastatingly, two white British police officers took selfie photos with the murdered bodies of sisters, Bibaa Henry and Nicole Smallman⁷ in June 2020, and posted them on line; a torrent of racial abuse was hurled at the three black England footballers when (July 2021) England lost the Euros final on penalties. Every step taken by the Church to challenge racism, hidden, subtle, or overt, must be an ode to human progress.

1.4.2 For the purposes of this Strategy, the problem has recently emerged on two grounds. Firstly, the SBC’s research shows that, while evidence of overt racism or personal prejudice was not apparent, the potential for ethnically based exclusion was noticeable. Such bias is likely to have taken root in the historical social conditioning of both black and white people, to accept and adapt to forms of exclusion and discrimination as “norms.” It is clear, however, that while the SBC does not simply wish “to avoid racism, but be a force for challenging and overcoming it,”⁸ measures to meet the challenge can be transformative in essence and temperament.

Tensions and temperament

1.4.3 The problem is crystallised in stories, anecdotes, and experiences shared with the SBC. These include limited minority ethnic participation and representation in leadership; territorial claims of entitlement to ‘ownership’ and the way things are done and by whom, thereby “quietly messaging” exclusion to minorities; a sense of indifference by some white believers towards their non-white counterparts; a lack of effective communication, e.g., some growing feelings of isolation in groups where black and brown people are present. However, an important exception emerged for some black and brown contributors: their temperament, educational background, and positive attitude towards fellow believers have contributed to the perception of unity and provided a sense of belonging in both rural and urban contexts.

Rural and Urban communities

1.4.4 The SBC comprises many rural community congregations which are demographically white, while some urban congregations are ethnically mixed; but both contexts can be most welcoming. Regardless of the level of diversity, or because of it, and the general impact of racism in Church, the Methodist Conference's abhorrence⁹ is instructive. Conference statements, therefore, suggest a key role for all Churches, including rural communities. A lack of visible ethnic diversity does not validate ignoring ethnicity-based prejudice and inequality, subtly or overtly, wherever it may exist. Indeed, an ethnically mixed presence in urban Churches does not deny the deeper ethnic issues.

Deeper questions

1.4.5 Secondly, deeper questions have re-emerged in what became a defining moment in the history of the struggle for racial justice. The on-screen murder of African American man, George Floyd¹⁰ reflected an unmistakable challenge to institutions globally, to reach deeper, and more definitively tackle structural racism, and appreciate what it means to be a "black body" in contemporary society. This call resonated in consort with the global movement to value black and brown lives,¹¹ in a multi-ethnic chorus to "end racism." It is a voice which comprises unprecedented numbers of white British people and the authorities.

2. AUTHORITY

2.1 The authority underpinning this Strategy encompasses the Methodist Church in Britain's policy and discipline as contained in the *Constitutional Practice and Discipline* (CPD), guidance of the SBC's Circuit Leadership Team (CLT), and Conference 2021, embracing a future where all people, whatever their identities, can flourish and contribute to the Church's vision and mission.

2.2 MISSION STATEMENT

The SBC is committed to promoting equity and an inclusive ministry model, with, and among all people, treating all persons justly, regardless of ethnicity, colour, social class, or nationality, and united in God's creative act of the Incarnation, Passion, Resurrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ.

2.3 VISION STATEMENT

The SBC seeks to enable its staff, membership, the Community Roll and all others to respect, love, and treat all people, including black and brown people, justly, following Christ Jesus in daily living, and thereby commit to a personal relationship with God and his church.¹²

3. ONE-ANOTHERING

3.1 Policy making in this Strategy is informed primarily by the SBC's research findings.¹³ While care is taken to avoid reinventing the wheel, being, working and worshipping together across ethnic or cultural boundaries demand active listening, obedience, reckoning with the facts of history, loving, learning, and relearning. To this end, a brief theological platform is offered, analysing what "person" and "mission," mean in the context of the idea of "oneanothering,"¹⁴ together with a succinct historical picture tracing the roots of racism.

3.2 This theological-historical basis is intended to demonstrate how being, faith and love can enhance understanding of our collective historical footprints and assist us with integrating the vision. Ethnicity is not mere academic discussions about unity, but the opportunity for occupying space together, acting by faith, or not.

3.3 Any Christian approach to a contemporary model of mission in which racial equity is regarded as inevitable, is legitimized by at least three forces: compliance with the law of the land, an honest reappraisal of British history, including black history, and above all, clear biblical appreciation of the keys to just relations. Sermons, training opportunities that address racial justice by which people improve their skills and confidence, can contribute to personal growth and reparatory justice.

4. JUSTICE

4.1 Across Britain and local SBC contexts, racism is a lived experience. The absence of claims or overt forms, such as victimisation, ethnic or social exclusion, or systemic racism, do not belie the reality of such experiences. Hence the Church's recognition of racism as sin, already atoned.

4.2 The problem is characterised, however, often by a lack of knowledge, or the experience of fear of racial equity; this can lead to the conclusion, "there is no racism here," (See paras. 1.4.2 and 1.4.3). Such attitudes and, therefore, practices are pervasive, and difficult to eliminate because attitudes are ingrained; their origins are located in the pathology underlying historical inhuman treatment, and beliefs based in the pseudo-scientific myth that some people are superior, and others are morally and intellectually inferior.¹⁵ The consequent repercussions for living justly run deep.

4.3 Justice, or righteousness, that is, the act of "being right," or "doing the right" thing, understood as such in Greek - the main original language of the New Testament - by the word, *dikaiois*,¹⁶ is central to God's divine creative act. Such discordant patterns of life treated as "norms," can make Christian adherents, rightly, feel duty-bound, therefore, to recognise, face, and work to transform them, to living for, and with, one-another.

4.4 Justice and one-anothering are not mutually exclusive. One-anothering can well be served when cultures and ethnicities meet, personally engaging each other, sharing with respect when "getting to know you" becomes an active personal journey in a positive, safe, and affirming space. Oneanothering opens up opportunities for

interfaith relations to grow, discordant ethnic identities to heal, and Christian unity to flourish in the contexts of love, power, and justice, through the work of ethnically diverse groups sharing together in re-examining backgrounds and histories.

5.

HISTORY – Transmission of a culture

5.1 Forms of racial inequality - from micro aggressions to race hate crimes - identified in this Strategy have their roots primarily in the historic transatlantic slave trade, colonialism, empire building, and white supremacy, to which historical scholarship attests.¹⁷ Institutions have not made the content of this historical narrative accessible to black, brown, or white people. Consequently, generations of all ethnicities have been unaware of, or disinterested in, the reasons why mainly African and Asian descendants of past European and British colonial lands were considered unequal in humanity, intelligence, and morality, despite any exceptions to the contrary.

5.2 This appeal to history helps establish a secure basis on which building a feasible and sustainable racial justice Strategy rests. History demonstrates, for example, that just outcomes are achieved only when the historical narrative is justly structured, edited by new evidence, and shared, not avoided. In his widely acclaimed history of racism and Britain entitled, *Britain's Black Debt*, Professor Hilary Beckles, Pro-Vice Chancellor of University of the West Indies, points to the source of division, and simultaneously the platform for unity between black and white peoples. He reports that the

“English created laws in which they had ‘absolute’ ownership, control and authority over enslaved Africans...and generally relate to them as chattels. As legal non-humans Africans experienced what no other social group did.”¹⁸

5.3 When the British Parliament passed the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act, 1807, racism was already ingrained in the national consciousness. Cause and justification grew in colonial lands and in the minds of chattel slaves, persons commodified as owned “property.” History here casts its long shadow of centuries rule wherever beneficial to the national interest, such as the highly profitable Caribbean sugar cane which provided unquench advantage.¹⁹ God holistically values the human, without exception (Micah 6:8; Matthew 25:31-46; Galatians 3:26-29). I turn now to a brief theological reflection on key New Testament concepts of person and mission.

Essential reading

Guilaine Kinouani, *Living While Black, the essential guide to overcoming racial trauma*, Ebury Press, (London: 2021).

David Olusoga, *Black and British, A Forgotten History* (Pan Books: 2017).

6. THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION - PERSON AND MISSION

For who is greater, the one who is at the table or
the one who serves? (Luke 22: 25-27; Mark 9:34).

6.1 We seek two objectives in this section. Firstly, we endorsed the positive intent the conclusions of a recently published Christian race equality report (one of many published over 40 years by white majority UK Churches), entitled *Present and Participating: A place at the table*²⁰ (space here permits only brief references to the main points). Secondly, we re-examine one of the report's offers, that "we welcome all to the table," hosts welcome guests – that is, the powerful white church, welcomes the "poor, ethnically different guests, to participate." This is claimed against the background of endless inequality in the mainstream. The apparent contradiction has important ramifications for how "person" and "mission" are understood in the struggle for equity.

6.2 One of the principal divisive issues in human relationships has been our desire to exercise dominion over one another. This is lamented repeatedly by Christian leadership and scholarship throughout modern Christian history, and by large sections of society.²¹ But as early as Mark's Gospel, the disciples' dispute over personal greatness (Mark 9:33, 34; 10:35-37) shows their lack of understanding of Jesus' solemn affirmation about his abandonment of power, his death. Lutheran theologian, Professor of New Testament and systematic theology at Greifswald University and Tübingen, Adolph Schlatter, puts it clearly when he notes also "how impregnated they were with the temper of their own culture where questions of precedence and rank were constantly arising."²² The impression from scripture is that Jesus invites all as 'equals', sharing his humanity with *all*, rich and poor, oppressors and the oppressed as can be inferred from Jesus' High Priestly Prayer (John 17); but Jesus is compelled to defend those who are marginalised (Matthew 5:1-12). The church consequently is challenged to fulfill his mission (Matthew 28:19, Acts chapters 2 and 4) to, and with all persons.

6.3 Person

6.3.1 This brief reflection on "person" is undertaken here to elucidate how, by different forms of denial or exclusion, people can be deemed "non-person," or a fragmented version of person. Such forms of being person can establish how all persons belong to one another (cf. 3:1-3 above), but of inherently diverse cultural and ethnic identities. As the allure of power emerges, tensions, followed by fragmentation also emerge, as with the disciples, who were caught up in their constant struggle for personal success in the new kingdom they had anticipated. It is not wrong, of course, to be industrious or ambitious, but when ambition drives obedience and service to the margins, it becomes ugly.

6.3.2 Miroslav Volf, Croatian Protestant theologian at Yale University,²³ devastatingly classifies such sin in three forms of exclusion: *elimination* through killing or assimilation; *domination* by assigning others the status of inferior beings; and *abandonment* by keeping others at a safe distance so that their "dehumanised

bodies can make no immoderate claims.” These are lived experiences for many today, which amounts to a contradiction of person as in the creation narratives.

6.3.3 Rather, the challenges to convention have a basis in which identity is validated concretely in Christ. Volf reminded us, therefore, that any differences between us were healed “when Jesus broke the wall of enmity, but he did not erase difference.”²⁴ Furthermore, though there is a tendency to ignore the problem (1.4), the divine image of Christ, the *imago Dei*, could not obscure its wide application. The Son is declared the visible representation and manifestation of the Father in creation and redemption, of all.

6.3.4 We believe that God, at creation, endowed humans with qualities and characteristics that originate from God’s own divine being: imagination, intellectual capacity, spirit, emotions, a will with which to engage in acts of deliberation and decision-making, and a moral conscience with which to discern or distinguish between right and wrong, and good and evil.

6.3.5 On the strength of the biblical picture of person, the Church recognises and seeks to uphold *person*, without exception, as manifested in and through God, the Person and Work of Jesus the Christ, by the Holy Spirit. Contrary to this, however, renowned thinkers with enduring historical and cultural influence in religion, education, politics, and social and political contexts, such as David Hume, Immanuel Kant, George W F Hegel, John Locke, have all denied full humanity to some, primarily African people.²⁵ Challenging such existential distortions is likely to evoke trepidation, even rebuttal, given their social and economic origins, in which hierarchical values to personhood were assigned according to “race.” The implications for mission were profound.

6.4 Mission

6.4.1 It might be accepted that the idea of mission, as offered in scripture, tradition and reason provides a secure basis for appreciating the presence and participation of persons, those understood to be ‘different’ in a non-fragmentary, but holistic acknowledgement of the person invited to the table. This process entails the act of inviting, host and guest, and the participatory role, examined in three observations.

6.4.2 One, Mark’s gospel emphasizes divine action in which Christ’s power and servanthood are essential (para. 6. 3-5) to healing distortions. On that basis, no longer could distortion be consistent where the church in this new commonwealth, wilfully or inadvertently regard power as a way of woefully controlling others. British Professor of biblical theology, Stephen Wright, who railed against such exercise of dominion over others, sharply concurs and objects: “Shared dominion over the earth has become oppression of, and subservience to, one another.”²⁶

6.4.3 Two, Jesus’ cosmic commands (Matt. 28:19) provide the dynamic basis for understanding the wide and varied mark of mission. Making disciples of all nations, *ta ethna*, is effectively about redressing human relationships regardless of cosmic considerations (Mk. 3:33-34; Ephesians 2: 14). “Whoever God wills,” Jesus utters in response to the question, “who are my mother and my brothers?” does not imply a limited constituency.²⁷

6.4.4 Three, pursuing the goals of mission, the Church theologically and practically commits its servants to a just assignment everywhere and to *all*. It is often thought that the Church's failure to meet the challenge of urban or rural mission, to develop a strong identification with the 'new' community requires a prophetic edge, a fearlessness of the dehumanised and unknown, where the example of Jesus drives action. Dr Robert Beckford in his reflection on gang culture in the UK is convinced: "the prophetic approach is the only viable way of creating a counterculture..."²⁸ a culture of equality and respect.

6.4.5 Mission in a largely white cultural context has often been seen as taking little account of the impact of imperialistic, enslaved, and colonial history on enslavers' descendants and the descendants of slaves. Three centuries have inevitably exacted what, by all accounts, it means to be white and British, and what it means to be black,²⁹ despite a shared history.

6.4.6 It is logical to conclude, therefore, that the positive all-embracing identity which defines "person," and the universality of the unlimited witness of Jesus' mission renders distortion and fragmentation based on ethnicity unsustainable. The secure foundations on which a unified and shared future can be built is yet to be fully appreciated. Small steps towards that future can be lit afresh by widespread "one-anothering," where hosts and guests toil together, in the mutual decision for equity and esteem.

6.4.7 Finally, three questions continue to confront us: One, given the fragmentation by which the identity of the hosts - "powerful and white cultural 'norm'" - projects distorted history, is the practice of equity and justice as the "norms" today achievable? Two, concomitantly, with what regard are guests, "powerless and 'different'" held? Three, to whose table are guests meeting hosts. Ultimately, efforts to overcome fragmentation in a shared mission are most likely to prosper when hosts acknowledge the personhood of guests.

6.4.8 The SBC's vision to bring its own positive input to the problem is timely. It takes seriously the convergence of a *Kairos* – the right time - and a positive global endeavour, sanctioned by a healthy appreciation of personhood, to value black lives in church and society, provide energy, prophecy, and resource. *Present and Participating* is meritorious, but, as Volf declares: "We must both cultivate a distance from culture and at the same time belong to our culture,"³⁰ thus revealing and rectifying history, while correcting the present and shaping the future.

6.4.9 On the strength of these foregoing foundational themes – theology of person and mission, history, and the collective bases for inclusiveness, we set out in Part Two and Part Three below, policy proposals and ideas, and useful information, respectively.

Essential Reading

David Olusoga, *Black and British, A Forgotten History* (Pan Books: 2017).
Akala, *Natives - Race & Class in the Ruins of Empire*, The Sunday Times Best Seller, Hodder & Stoughton Ltd (London: 2019).



PART TWO

1.

POLICY: WAYS OF BEING WORSHIPPING AND WORKING

1.1. This racial justice policy seeks not only to raise awareness, but structurally to develop and progress inclusive ways of living, working and being Church, as positive advocates of the priesthood of all believers (Leviticus 16:14-22; 1 Peter 2:9; Hebrews 4:14). The policy is based on SBC's response to its report, *Exploring the Issues* (Appendix 1), and on Part One of this Strategy.

1.2 The policy, focusing on ethnicity, recognises the Methodist Conference's commitment to anti-racism, as reflected in its anti-racism statements, Toolkit, The Inclusive Church strategy (June 2021),³¹ and the nine Protected Characteristics of the Equality Act 2010 (see page 14), within a flexible framework.

2.

FRAMEWORK

2.1 The policy framework, which can be delivered in three phases, falls into six categories. The effectiveness of this approach is implicit, and will largely depend on three provisions: One, the senior leadership and EDI workers bringing together the Circuit in an atmosphere of sharing and learning; two, leaders and EDI workers using the information provided (Part Three);³² and three, workers and participants engaging in these activities sensitively, safely, and compassionately, being opened to sharing and learning new facts and information together. This also mean dealing openly, but non-judgmentally, with any criticism or negativity. The categories which are subject to change and development or updating, are as follows: -

- a) information & guidance;
- b) anti-racism training and education;
- c) complaints and conflict resolution;
- d) story-telling and social interaction;
- e) EDI (racial justice) lead/ team;
- f) language and communication.

2.2 Categories 1 to 6 can be clustered to form consistent ways of working, or used separately, according to the Circuit's needs, priorities, and resources. The framework for each category is designed to provide clear guidance, and workers may apply the most appropriate ways of working in each category or cluster. An experienced or trained EDI (racial justice) team would ensure effectiveness by meeting, (2.1), regularly.

Example:

A service or an event created and used specifically for the purpose of healing, could include all or some of the following elements. It is important to establish and work in a safe, welcoming, and compassionate space with time to:

- Remember – recall, reflect, acknowledge, heal.
- Regret - unburden, share, actively
- Repent – forgive, be forgiven
- Repair – respect, include, socialise, train as necessary, promote confidence
- Reconcile – meet, one-to-ones, group, share
- Rejoice – rejoice openly, personally, praiseworthyly

3.

POLICY PROPOSALS: Ways of being worshipping and working

RACIAL EQUALITY POLICY DEVELOPMENT	
IMMEDIATE RESPONSE TO ISSUES & NEEDS OUTSTANDING	SBC would be mindful to ensure that inequality issues, particularly racial inequality or tensions present or arising, are dealt with swiftly on the provision of a report, complaint mechanism, or a personal conversation with the EDI lead/team. SBC should establish a process or person to hear and address any outstanding issues or tensions, in confidence, at the earliest opportunity. Refer to Part One, sections 1.4
ENCOURAGE SAFE SPACE FOR INTERPERSONAL DIALOGUE	SBC would be mindful to build and enable use of safe spaces for dialogue, and socialising among its peoples, including black and brown people, on a range of topics; develop and mainstream inclusivity, friendship, and discipleship in what it means to be Christians together. Part One, section 1.4.2, 1.4.3 & section 4.4
APPOINT & FORMALISE DEDICATED TEAM	Policy development and the programme for progress will require that an Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion team be formally installed, with reference to the Circuit Meeting, Superintendent and CLT. Refer to Part One, sections 1-7; and 2:1-3. SBC to provide resources for work on emerging racial and justice and other justice issues, ensuring the attention and support of a dedicated officer or team is accessible, making it their business to address the issues efficiently. Part One, section 4.4
TRAIN PERSONNEL	Provision of in-service training through sources such as the Learning Network or other programme for local preachers, for example, where also black and brown people could be encouraged to take opportunity, to equip them with skills and confidence. Refer to Part One, section 1.4
PROMOTING ETHNIC UNITY	SBC is fully committed to promoting and maintaining ethnic justice and equality in Church and society, through speech and literature, treating all persons regardless of ethnicity, colour, culture, nationality, or social status justly, fairly, and respectfully. Refer to Part One, section 3.4; 6:3
REPRESENTATION	Often a mark of keen leadership: discernment and enlisting persons of different ethnicities, in addition to white, to prepare for Circuit, congregational ministry, and other interested to candidate for presbyteral, diaconal or another ministry.

IDENTIFY & ENLIST POTENTIAL LEADERS & RELUCTANT PROSPECTS	SBC should ensure that the electoral or appointment processes take account of the need to enlist reluctant individuals or groups, to dialogue, encourage, train, and appoint from among unrepresentative groups for office, e.g., the Church Council, Committee on Finance. Refer to Part One, section 3.4
SOCILISATION	SBC can benefit by ensuring that social “getting to know you” events outside worship recess are available for its staff, membership, Community Roll, and friends to learn, share meals, fellowship, stories, and experiences in a creative, safe, and non-threatening environment, on a regular basis, enlisting black, brown, and white people equally to share the lead together. Refer to Part One, sections 3 & 4.4.
CARE & SHARE/ JOINT SERVICES	SBC to promote Care and Share Circuit Services as a way to build interpersonal relationships across rural, urban, and other religious spaces. Examples may include Circuit-wide Food Festivals (starting in 2022), with bi-lingual worship, exploring opportunities with on an interfaith basis, ensuring churches renting its premises and ready to share. Refer Part One, Section 4.4.
RAISE AWARENESS	SBC could derive huge benefit through teaching opportunities with workshops, using video footage, reading courses such as choices from the book list included in this Strategy, or BHM, WPCU, The Lent Course or other local arrangements, including work on the connection between British history and black history. Refer to Part One, section 3.1 and 4.
TWINNING CHURCHES/ SPACES	SBC is encouraged in the endeavour of twinning churches in order to share ministry, fellowship, and deepen understanding and friendship.
ENCOURAGE PREACHING RACIAL JUSTICE	SBC reaffirms its commitment to Kingdom of God teaching and practice by encouraging staff to embrace the need in regular preaching and prayer points, highlighting Christian unity, and specifically the diversity of creation; also using such yearly tools as Racial Justice Sunday and Black History Month. See Part One, section 3.4.
PUBLISHED PUBLIC STATEMENT - UNITY OF HUMANITY	The treatment of all people should include the statement that no one is superior to another, and that no one is inferior to the other, regardless of ethnicity, colour, or culture. This position could be reflected in all decisions, publicity, and actions across administrative, clerical, and executive functions of the Circuit. Refer to Part One, sections 4 & 5. and section 6.3
REPRESENTATION AND PARTICIPATION	SBC to appoint black and brown persons to represent the Circuit; invite applications of initial interest, and use these as a bases for conversation, in attempt to expand representation; supplement Methodist’s recruitment policies where necessary; clearly identify the main components of vacancies or new posts; what is implied and where flexibility might be possible. Refer to Part One, sections 1.4.3; 4; 6:4

In addition, and complementary, to this policy statements we have set out in Part Three a glossary of terms to assist users, a summary the role and importance of an EDI team, and ideas for an ongoing program for progress.

PART THREE

INFORMATION RESOURCE

Commitment to building and maintaining a culture of non-discrimination and anti-racism prevails, as racism is regarded as sin.

Methodist Church in Britain

1.

WHO IS IT FOR?

1.1 This information resource is intended, intended to be mandatory, for use by all persons, particularly staff and workers of SBC who deliver mission and ministry and participate as members, friends, and others, including staff, local preachers, worship leaders, teachers, departmental leaders/heads, probationers, EDI lead/team, and others.

1.2 The layout of information is designed to help users understand the language and terms in current use, and provide insight and information, including current legal requirements, to promote the spiritual, social, and personal well-being of all persons.

2.

GOVERNMENT LEGISLATION - EQUALITY ACT 2010

Nine Protected Characteristics		
While it is important to note that churches and other religious bodies are granted exemption in some cases, it is unlawful to discriminate against or treat anyone less favourably on grounds of nine Protected Characteristics, because of a person's...		
1.	Age	belongs to a particular age (e.g., 50-years old) or range of ages (e.g., 18 to 30 years old) less favourably for reasons relating to their age (whether young or old).
2.	Disability	has a disability, physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to conduct normal day-to-day activities.
3.	Gender Reassignment	is transitioning from one gender to another. Gender Identity refers the way an individual identifies with their own gender, e.g., as being either a man or a woman, or in some cases being neither, which can be different from biological sex.
4.	Marriage and Civil Partnership	whose marriage can be defined as a formal union between two people (same-sex or different sex persons) as recognised by law, and the Methodist Church in Britain. See Conference decision 2021 on <i>God in love Unites us</i> .
5.	Pregnancy and Maternity	is in the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity, the period after the birth, is linked to maternity leave in employment. Protection against maternity discrimination runs for 26 weeks after giving birth, including treating a woman unfavourably, for example, because she is breastfeeding.

6.	Race	belongs to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.
7.	Religion and Belief	of their religion, which has the meaning usually given to it, but belief includes religious convictions and beliefs including philosophical belief and lack of belief. Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live, for it to be included in the definition.
8.	Sex (Gender)	of reasons relating to the sex of a man or woman.
9.	Sexual Orientation	of a person's sexual attraction towards their own sex, the opposite sex or more than one sex. less favourable treatment of the grounds of sexual orientation is unlawful.

3. GLOSSARY

3.1 The terms listed here are in current usage across UK government, certain media outlets, Non-Governmental Organisations, and the churches, and are to help SBC understand the terms. Many of them are subject to dispute, but SBC loses nothing by encouraging personnel to familiarise themselves, incorporate usage into its lexicon, and, where necessary, support a more inclusive outlook. But language is in constant flux and changes.

3.2 Though some terms change in meaning and influence, correct and up-to-date usage of these terms are recommended in order to:

- mainstream a positive regard for, and ideas which support, anti-discrimination, and contribute to the elimination of racial inequalities;
- prevent identity abuse, alienation, micro aggressions, and encourage respect and responsibility in building positive human relationships.

GENERALLY ACCEPTED TERMINOLOGY	
Race³³	reference to a person's colour, ethnic origin.
Black and brown	usually people of African, Asian, Indigenous origins, or specifically non-white persons, representing what is often meant by "people of colour," of African and Asian (universal) heritages.
Ethnicity	each person belongs to a 'people group,' e.g., Asian (universal term), white (Caucasian), African, with particular common heritages and characteristics, and variations within particular ethnicities.
Racial prejudice	bias or action against (black and brown generally) persons based on ethnicity, colour, or ethnic heritage, in the UK, <u>generally but not exclusively against black or brown persons.</u>
Racism (types)	a <i>system</i> in which the white majority are able to enforce personal prejudice mixed with their power and privilege over non-white peoples through political, economic, social, and institutional means.
	"prejudice multiplied by power," work together to create the system of inequality.

	Systemic (or Structural) racism (one of six types) emphasises the presence of a <i>system</i> with interconnected institutions, policies, practices, ideas, and behaviours, which give unjust amounts of resources, rights, and power to white people, while denying the same to black and brown people.
Mixed Heritage (Mixed race)	Persons with dual heritage by birth, such as parentage of white and black or brown origins.
Positive Action	Steps an employer can take to encourage people from groups with diverse needs or with a past record of disadvantage or low participation to apply for jobs. The job is still given to the best candidate, regardless of whether they have a particular characteristic or not.
Implicit Bias/Unconscious Bias	Attitudes or negative stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions at an unconscious level e.g., commenting that a black person “is so articulate,” while being unaware of how that comment implies that black persons are NOT normally articulate.
Conscious bias	Generally, but not exclusively, unwitting prejudice against a person base on the negative stereotype that associates that person with, for example, e.g., the wilful choice of a white person of similar or worse qualification for employment, than a black person or brown person based on ethnicity or race.
Negative Stereotypes	A person’s association with a particular action or activity based on identity, culture, or ethnicity (race), e.g., a black person wearing a hoodie while shopping, regarded as a criminal looking to shoplift, because black people, by ethnicity, are associated in white people’s minds with such criminal identities.
White privilege	Not meant to indicate that all white people are ‘privileged’ in the sense that they do not face economic hardship; white privilege is a set of advantages and/or immunities from which white people benefit as norms, beyond those common to all others. White privilege can exist without white people’s conscious awareness of its presence, including being white; it helps, however, to maintain a racial hierarchy in the UK, which has been promoted historically by some renowned historical figures. It is not common that a police officer or other public servant, for example, would deliberately kneel on white person’s neck until that person dies, simply because that person was white! White privilege is transmitted intergenerationally.

White supremacy	popularly used in the USA, this term has meaning across the western Christian world, often tacitly. White supremacy theology, for example, is the belief where white Christians have creatively “fitted” Jesus into the system reflecting white European culture, image, and likeness. Some denominations are deeply embedded in white supremacy theology. It is deeply ingrained in the British church, for example, from the images of a “white” Jesus to the idea that missionaries “civilised” other lands, such as parts of Africa. Arguments against white supremacy includes the identity of Jesus, who was a Jew, of Jewish parents, with olive skin, raised by rites, rituals, and education in Jewish texts. Western Caucasian culture, depicting Jesus as white, have set Christianity against non-white peoples, and created an us-and-them understanding of Christianity.
One Race the Human Race	It is the belief that ‘race’ was a narrow and divisive political and social construct, designed for the purpose of describing certain people by distinctive physical traits, which divides them from others. It is the common belief among Christians and others that there is only one race, the human race, referring to all human beings regardless of physical or ethnic characteristics.
Reparations	usually refers to British and European transatlantic enslavement - some form of compensation it is argued should be made to descendants of the enslaved during the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Compensation could take account of the detrimental psychological and sociological impact on black and brown people. Repairing the damage is not thought to imply “providing money to untold billions,” but the provision of opportunity for education, training, living conditions, poverty reduction, relieving ignorance, employment, development.
Cognitive Dissonance	this is what happens when a person is holding onto contradictory beliefs, ideas, or values simultaneously, which is experienced as psychological stress when that person participates in an action that opposes their belief, e.g., advocating freedom for all, while demonstrably supporting practices that oppose that. Or some hold the view that all people are equal in the eyes of God, yet they support the unequal treatment of some based-on colour or ethnicity.
Ethnic minority or ‘minority ethnic’	though ethnic minority is frequently used in the public sphere, it is regarded as offensive by most people to whom it refers, because it places the emphasis, wrongly, on “ethnicity.” Thus, denying ethnicity to white people, and undermining the identity of black and brown people of global majority heritage. Rather “minority ethnic” respects and rightly recognises the ethnicity of white people.

Equality or Equity	equality: regard and treatment of some people, as you would regard and treat others within the demographically dominant group. People are equal in fundamental worth at the point of being human and moral.
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4. AWARENESS-RAISING

4.1 The history of black people in Britain is closely akin to, and comprises, part of the history of Britain on a whole. Dark as it was for several generations, that history has been omitted from the history books and schools' curricula, except today in some individual schools.³⁴ Now, the following represents small selection of opportunities for self-education and awareness raising using excellent, easily accessible resources.

EDUCATION AND SELF-EDUCATION	
The key to knowledge, and therefore, the door to freedom, justice & peace for us all	
College	Centre for Black Theology at Queens Birmingham Somerset Road, Edgbaston, Birmingham B15 2QH Phone: 0121 454 1527 d.mckemsie@queens.ac.uk
Media	Paths to Justice, Webinars, Videos: BBC, ITV Channel 4, and Channel 5 have all launched high quality and factual historical material. They have also increased diversity across the outlets and public service broadcast programming.
Online	Empire land: How Imperialism Has Shaped Modern Britain eBook: Sanghera, Sathnam: Amazon.co.uk: Books
Self-education	The most impactful way to get a fuller understanding and grasp the significance of this moment in our Church and across the globe is self-education. See the resources list in this policy, on the website, and public broadcasting educational programmes.
Informative Books	David Olusoga, <i>Black and British, A Forgotten History</i> , Pan Books, (London: 2017). A must read!
	Hilary McD. Beckles, <i>Britain's Black Debt, Reparations for Caribbean Slavery and Native Genocide</i> , University of the West Indies Press (Kingston: 2013). A must read!
	Guilaine Kinouani, <i>Living While Black, the essential guide to overcoming racial trauma</i> , Ebury Press (London: 2021). A must read!
	Akala, <i>Natives, Race & Class in the Ruins of Empire</i> , Two Roads, John Murray Press, (London 2018). A must read!
	James Walvin, <i>A Short History of Slavery</i> , Penguin books, (London: 2007).

	Thomas Chatterton Williams, <i>Unlearning Race, Self-Portrait in Black and White</i> , John Murry (Publishers), (London: 2019). A must read
	“What White People Can Do Next – from Allyship to Coalition” by Emma Dabiri.

5.

IDEAS FOR THE ROLE OF EDI TEAM & REMIT

5.1 We anticipate SBC would consider engaging an EDI lead/team, some of whose responsibilities are indicative in the ideas for a job specification set out below. Personnel dedicated to the role will ensure efficiency of the Strategy.

5.2 The role, tasks and responsibilities are almost implied in the Strategy, but a process determining the terms and conditions of the role/s, whether volunteer or with a paid component, will require the CLT’s wisdom. The argument for having a part-time volunteer role is well-understood but could equally be a disincentive.

5.3 SBC’s EDI lead/team would expect a report either by a claimant or staffer or other person, where there is a potential or actual situation requiring attention. Importantly, the substance of any matter, the person or persons involved, and any relevant information should be treated in the strictest confidence. In addition, dealing with racism and discrimination complaints or claims should be subject to the Methodist Church in Britain’s protocols concerning confidentiality.

5.4 In the absence of dedicated personnel and resources the EDI team/lead would also hear and appropriately address or upscale any issues and ascertain the best course of action.

5.5 The EDI team/ lead would ensure development and implementation of policy, monitor and review progress, report regularly to CLT and Circuit Committee, and assist as required in dealing with any issues or challenges already presenting or arising.

5.6 Together with the EDI team/ lead, the CLT would agree the annual work programme or at other intervals and review the role to ensure value and effectiveness while providing suitable resources support this ministry. An independent consultant would be an asset.

5.7 The following broad EDI (racial justice) job specifications are mere suggestions:

- ensure appropriate persons specifications;
- a role comprising a team of 3 or 5 persons, mixed, with one person carrying a lead role, especially for listening and information collection which the team would assess. This could also mean that other members of the team could lead on issues under the other Protected Characteristics;
- EDI team to undertake training, or start with already experienced and/or initially trained persons;

- EDI team to consult with Circuit Superintendent, CLT, Circuit Committee, congregations, external representation;
- team to develop, support, and deliver full work programme across the Circuit;
- consult with and engage ecumenical and interfaith partners, releasing and assisting the Circuit Superintendent in these roles or as directed;
- assess and monitor effectiveness of the work programme and install any changes and modifications.

5.8 Managing situations:

MANAGING RACIAL JUSTICE ISSUES, COMPLAINTS	
The EDI lead/Team is first point of contact; alternatively, and according to the circumstances, the team should contact the Minister.	
1	alert the EDI lead/team for support and assistance;
2	EDI lead/team to listen in confidence, formally or informally, and without pre-judgment to all concerned;
3	try to determine the substance of the matter by listening to parties and consulting with the appropriate Characteristics and the Church's policy;
4	assess where CPD guidance and support might be required;
5	decide whether transferral to the minister, Safeguarding, general Disciplinary Procedure, Conflict Resolution or other department is the best course to take;
6	where possible, resolve the matter with the person/s concerned, and/or through the minister and local Church;
7	in all cases, inform and work with the Circuit Superintendent (who should always be kept briefed) and/or the CLT for support and guidance, particularly where this is vital to resolve an issue;
8	where external referral becomes necessary, the CLT and/or Circuit Meeting would be expected to manage the matter.
9	in most cases, the EDI lead/Team would ensure the matter is dealt with locally or referred to the most appropriate person or department in the Circuit.

5.9 Recruitment

5.9.1 In addition, and complementary to the normal Stationing process, SBC is encouraged to assess how recruitment to clerical stationing of ministers, and administrative posts, contribute to inclusiveness and opened processes.

5.9.2 This could be achieved through the model for advertising posts, the selection criteria, interview integrity, appointment objectivity, in-service support, opened ended communication, retention, and promotion.

6. PROGRAMME FOR PROGRESS

- 6.1 Formally install and enable the EDI team to progress the Strategy in a systematic way. Offer training in anti-racism care and practice, where necessary.
- 6.2 Appoint a lead person or joint leads where possible in a shared EDI mixed post.
- 6.3 With care, sensitivity, and confidentiality, assess what issues are present in the Circuit, and determine what action is necessary to hear and resolve them.
- 6.4 Convene the Circuit for two workshops in 2022. The group could follow-up previous workshops with themes such as the following:
 - a. *History and Me*, sharing experiences, personal stories about how colour, race and ethnicity can divide peoples
 - b. *What Equality Means* in person and the Church's mission.
- 6.5 Keep the Strategy under annual review through observations and proposals offered by the team, and build quarterly or half yearly targets and milestones, for example, on training, participation, and representation.
- 6.6 Examine how the strategy has helped the Circuit to make more diverse appointments, and plan for future training session for years 2 in 2023 and years 3 2024.
- 6.7 Reviewing the programme and role of the team annually, assessing effectiveness and ongoing work programme.

7. WHERE TO START?

The Connexional team working on the Inclusive Church process suggests some of the following list of ideas, with which we concur, to get you started: -

- 7.1 Pray! (Always a good place to begin!) The new Prayer Handbook 'A Place for All' will be an excellent resource. You could make this the point at which to suggest that others begin.
- 7.2 Organise the team and formally install its members at a Circuit event where possible.
- 7.3 Put some time in your diaries (EDI and CLT) for the year ahead to do this work (a session a month or a week is a good place to start... more if you can).
- 7.4 Speak to Superintendent Minister and Learning Network regional team-leaders, where necessary, and book time to discuss the role and training.

- 7.5 Read the through the Strategy and begin to plan how you can proceed and promote it in your Circuit Meeting.
- 7.6 Make an achievable workplan for the period ahead, using the Strategy, reading, planning, training, or listening.
- 7.7 Watch films and TV and read books... anything to 'get you into' a different world... perhaps focus on aspects of human life that you understand least?
- 7.8 Communicate with your superintendent minister to ask assistance, for example, contacts with Methodists who participate in EDI (racial justice) work in their working lives.
- 7.9 Spend one of your 'EDI hours' looking through the Methodist Church website's pages on EDI and work out what you might want to go back to.
- 7.10 Look at the various training webinar links from the website, examples here below.³⁵

PRAYERS

Almighty God, we thank you for our life of faith in Jesus Christ and your love for us all.

We pray for one another, for those at the fringes of church and society; for the courage and wisdom to help remove the stain of racial prejudice and racism, in thought, word, and deed; for all who will use these guiding steps, to transform the practice where one group of persons exercises dominion or supremacy over all others; and, as the teachings of Jesus demands, that we love God and our neighbour as ourselves, in living, working, and worshipping.

AMEN.

.....
Revd Arlington W Trotman
Methodist Supernumerary Minister
Former Director Churches Commission for Racial Justice
Former Moderator, Churches Commission for Migrants in Europe

APPENDIX 1

THE METHODIST CHURCH IN BRITAIN SOUTH BEDFORDSHIRE CIRCUIT

EQUALITY DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION Exploring Issues

Arlington W. Trotman
August 31, 2019

CONTENTS

1. Introduction	2
2. Rationale	2
3. What UK law says	2
4. What the Methodist Conference says	3
5. Findings & Analysis	3
6. Welcomed, not so welcomed	3
7. Rural Churches	4
8. Cross cutting themes	6
9. Mission – Participation and Invitation	6
10. Conclusion	7
11. Recommendations	8
12. APPENDIX 1	9

INTRODUCTION

1. Rationale

- 1.1 This report comprises the results of an exploratory survey examining Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI), particularly race and ethnicity, across the South Bedfordshire Circuit (SBC) of the Methodist Church. The findings and analysis I set out herein follow in accordance with contracted aims and objectives to “Explore Circuit-wide Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) project with others.”

1.2 I outlined the methodology used (Appendix 1) to facilitate the process whilst acknowledging inevitable limitations. Key perspectives which emerged from the study were acknowledged with integrity and analysed and led to a series of recommendations (Section 8). Three main motivations underpin necessity: the Methodist Church's EDI position, Circuit awareness and UK legislation.

2. What UK law says

2.1 In the UK legislation banning discrimination in employment on the grounds of race, colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins were in place since 1968 (1977 in Northern Ireland). Consistent reporting by the Methodist Church indicates the presence of racism and discrimination within the Church. Evidence in the public sphere shows that forms of blatant race discrimination still occur such as reactions to Brexit and Windrush illustrate; racism and discrimination remain pervasive also behind closed doors. Barbara Cohen of Runnymede Trust reminds us that racism has simply mutated into something far more subtle: 'anonymised tests of recruitment by written application', for example, which 'consistently show gross disparities between those with British-sounding names and others 'despite both possessing identical qualifications'.¹ Applicants with 'British' names were almost always invited for interview, while those with 'non-British'-sounding names were not.

2.2 The Equality Act 2010 (The Act) sets out to correct such behaviour and transform systems. The Act comprises nine Protected Characteristics against discrimination: Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnerships, Pregnancy and maternity, Race, Religion or belief, Sex, Sexual orientation. Having come into force in October 2010, The Act replaced previous legislation to ensure consistency in what employers need to do to maintain fairness in their workplaces and compliance with the law, but also to encourage more positive community relations.

2.3 Not all Churches or Church organisations can or need directly to confront all the challenges together, though all organisations and institutions must comply with the law. The focus of this report primarily, but not exclusively, rests on race with specific regard to EDI policy and practice.

2.4 The Act further prohibits persons from victimisation in the workplace and wider society on same grounds. It covers all employers, employees, and agency workers, paid or unpaid though some volunteers are not covered by the provisions of the Act. The Methodist Church is constrained primarily, however, by a theology of love that challenges sinfulness. The Church can rise beyond Government's legal ramifications, thereby working to a higher standard.

¹ Barbara Cohen, *Why do we need anti-racism laws in the 21st century?* in Equality, Employment, Politics, Identity, Racism (March 2015).

3. What Methodist Conference says

- 3.1 The Methodist Conference regards racism as sin, that is, disobedience to God's laws of love. In 2016 (and subsequently) Conference called for change in its people and systems of governing and passed a resolution containing the following text: 'The Methodist Conference abhors and deeply regrets those actions and words ... which incite hatred and lead to the victimisation of groups within society ... believing that such actions and words have been normalised in recent public discourse ... to stay silent when others are abused is to collude with those who seek to promote hatred and division. The Methodist Conference calls on the Methodist people to challenge racism and discrimination.'
- 3.2 It is, therefore, an expected and worthy undertaking for the SBC to explore its role in helping to realise the vision of a truly inclusive and genuinely opened and loving Church under the egis of Conference directions. It is incumbent, moreover, upon all Christians and Christian leadership at every level to acknowledge racism and discrimination, subtle or overt, and work in partnership together to eliminate this form of sin and injustice wherever and in whatever form it exists.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

1. Welcome, not so welcomed

- 1.1 Most respondents surveyed and interviewed thought that in general new and established persons joining the Circuit are welcomed. It was emphasized, however, that in some Churches persons can experience tension, unease, or resistance. Such experience is based not merely on race, interestingly, but rejection based on educational disadvantage or social class.
- 1.2 Reasons cited for rejection have included 'territorialism', a sense of 'ownership' which seek to maintain the status quo; this was likely to be more overt where dedicated and caring 'families' have historically led and sustained Churches; again, tacit resistance or an inability to accommodate 'difference' was frequently identified; perceived or the actual lack of expected language skills or accents resulted in forms of rejection.
- 1.3 Yet, a positive outlook and self-confidence could ensure a sense of inclusion by the new-comer or 'stranger.' Temperament of the individual is an important aspect, for example, of the cause for racial justice and religious and social inclusion. The initial welcome in these circumstances can be transcended by initiation of conversation, but this was thought directly relative to a person's social and educational background.
- 1.4 Though it is well recognised that community relations have changed since the 1950s and 1960s, a respondent remarked: 'When we get to know each other

more makes the difference'. This was reflected differently several times. Interaction between persons perceived as too different for personal engagement on encounter can increase the propensity to reject and exclude. Yet, the obverse is also true: awareness of a 'stranger' can improve relations. What seems more urgent in these circumstances is that hosts learn through teachings how to demonstrate discipleship and fellowship.

1.5 It was frequently remarked that the need to 'keep awareness high' was urgent. Persons who feel or were deliberately unwelcomed invoke the mission of the Church almost by default. And leaders 'should help all the congregation to recognise and respect all people.' This essential observation points to the responsibility also of ministers, both presbyterial and diaconal, to ensure all are accepted, protected, and supported wherever possible. UK anti-discrimination law does not overtly invoke a response to fairness based on identity always, nor do tenets of the Christian faith. Rather, in its emerging status, identity evokes a call 'to know' and 'to love' despite 'difference' (St John 4:4-26).

1.6 It was frequently remarked that unease or misunderstanding is dividing some congregations. Church communities where issues or conflict may have arisen, communication, 'awkwardness' or forms of exclusion cited, for example, in relation to Beech Hill, The Olive Tree, St John's, Oakdale, High Town - or where there is distrust, a mechanism for listening, hearing and engagement is of the utmost importance.

1.7 It was not clear whether Churches or individuals were aware of a complaints' procedure or a confidential support structure which helped where difficulties arose in relation to race or ethnicity (or indeed other issues such as social status). Some respondents were adamant that provision of a reliable resource or procedure would be an invaluable tool. What is reflected here is a need for policy and the development of competences in the Next Steps initiative for use among all Churches.

2. Rural Churches

2.1 Contributors stressed that rural Churches bore contrasting characteristics: rural Churches are generally 'welcoming communities,' but demography plays a primary role determining their composition which overwhelmingly or exclusively is white middleclass persons. Race or class, therefore, might not be an issue or a priority. There are good reasons for this.

2.2 Rural Churches are strongly family oriented, but it was noted that with some families engaged in their historical leadership, caring for and protecting those sacred spaces, openness to new situations or persons could create unease and the requirement for conversation and careful address. Consequently,

change could generally be a lengthy process. Yet, it was clear that rural Churches on occasions could be very inclusive indeed.

2.3 Notably, a sense of entitlement in the politics of Church life can give license to claims of some believers. Hence, the lack of diversity in many small congregations is in some respects thought supported by default to the existence of strong community schools. Most parents would naturally wish to school their children in the absolute best environments for achievement. Moreover, it was noted, Church members in many respects are drawn from outside the catchment area, and because of their relative demographic restrictions Church experiences a lack of visible diversity.

2.4 With commitment to ensuring rural Churches were opened spaces of worship for all persons, it was noted that 'village values can be communitive,' and conversations and connections, for example, on background through active listening can help in understanding diversity through a wider framework.

2.5 The challenge of diversity and inclusion at the rural level would not be one size fits all, but raising awareness through different lenses, e.g., offering to familiarise with Traveller culture where appropriate, or refugees in the community, can lead to understanding and diversity in rural Churches. Of course, persons would speak more freely with persons they already know, yet persons 'want to do and say the right thing' without upsetting others or being accused as racist.

2.6 Issues that can be restrictive to equality, diversity and inclusion, and the potentiality limiting the experience of what it means to feel included or to belong, would not be lost on rural Church communities. Yet, the principles of 'oneanothering' - that is, the new way of life characterised by an active love for God and for others, essentially the covenant love of God for humans as well as the human reciprocal love for God - necessarily extending to the love of one another, is central. Embracing cross-cutting themes such as learning to overcome negative stereotypes, embracing opportunities for mutual respect, and redeeming time as applied discipleship criteria would help leaders and members to transform rural and urban spaces.

2.7 The Circuit will increasingly be challenged to welcome and include persons continuing to choose Dunstable, Luton, and the developing area as their home.

3. Cross-cutting themes

3.1 Respondents appreciated that issues for consideration transcend race or ethnicity. Age and gender, mixed ethnicities, men, and women are potentially areas of discrimination and cannot be underestimated. Some Churches comprise females mainly or exclusively. Other crosscutting initiatives such as

Buzzaid, Youth Scape or Interfaith could produce helpful responses, if only followed up consistently with measurement and monitoring for further action.

- 3.2 The exploration of issues shows that harnessing people's skills and experiences presupposes the creation of opportunities for learning about people, with people, which might then lead to opportunities for genuinely shared experiences. Such a process could examine identifiable barriers and point to potential solutions. Embracing 80-90-year-olds in the discussion, especially some such as at Gravenhurst, for example, reveals potential for inter-generational cooperation.
- 3.3 The high priority placed on these issues illustrates the depth of necessity, first for acknowledgement, targeted examination, and what bespoke approaches might be viable and assist the decision for the most productive approach for best outcomes. Ignoring minor issues or challenges can only lead to chronic mountainous challenges over which to climb can only undermine the Circuit's more inclusive outlook.
- 3.4 Addressing the problem of exclusion whose nature may not fully or even partially be understood can be explored by assessing what is considered ultimately uncomfortable. Some issues can be addressed in sessions such as the EDI Toolkit, Sunday Night Live or other planned education and in-service training. In-service training, where speech and presentational peculiarities could be addressed exists in other parts of the Connexion.
- 3.5 Developing a policy and plan for managing local issues as mentioned above (see 1.6 above) and any reluctance to understand unity and inclusion where territorial attitudes prevail require immediate address. Where social or religious exclusion mean non-absorption of new persons, the rejection of ethnic identities or racial heritage based on historical legacies, change might be difficult to achieve, but these challenges can provide useful insights into the value of change and inform mission.

4. Mission - Participation and Invitation

- 4.1 Many people may be reluctant to assume roles in the life of the Church, because, as is often said, a true Methodist 'sits in the back'! Where black, Asian, minority ethnic and other national minorities demonstrate such attitudes several conditions might be inferred. These could include personality traits, feelings of inadequacy, indifference with corporate challenges that might have shaped the mindset, the lack of confidence or educational opportunity, commercial or other employment schedules, reaction to racism or class discrimination, segregation, or discouragement.
- 4.2 Diversity is possible in these circumstances, but it would almost certainly be impossible to move towards inclusion and equality until and unless awareness

increases, and unconscious bias acknowledged. Getting to know and be familiar with one-another as fellow believers is regarded as a strong signal beginning the process of overcoming many of the prohibitors mentioned above (4.1).

4.3 There is need also for ministers, both presbyterial and diaconal, to encourage and enlist persons spiritually discerned, with a view to enabling and releasing their gifts and honing skills that cannot be underestimated. Where there is a policy of participation in the business of Church, how this can be delivered in viable and fairer ways is critical. It can further be asked: what does a changing national and rural demographic mean for the Methodist Church?

4.3A crucial question which lies at the heart of EDI is “how does the Church discover its mission for today?” Many respondents indicate a crisis in Methodism which points to key features which are driving the Church today to understand and reimagine itself as the ‘living community of Christ.’ Rigidity in practice and/or policy will require fresh thinking about managing all nine Protected Characteristic in the context of knowledge of God’s action in the world. This extends to minority ethnic cultures, but also to refugees, migrants, Travellers, and people living at the fringes of society.

5. Conclusion

5.1 It became increasingly important to recognise in this study that, while the Circuit evinces a welcome, the issues highlighted revealed the need for work to address inequalities going forward. Unresolved broken communication and organisational challenges, a significant lack of racial awareness, and the provision of in-service training are remarkable in importance. What also became eminently compelling is the importance that a policy and/or guidance resource can assist inclusion if made available and accessible. Issues or conflicts in some Church communities may have arisen, as inevitably they will, but there appears a defining silence regarding address and solutions.

5.2 Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion is a government sponsored programme which the Methodist Church has adapted to support its theology of love equality and the dignity of all persons. Government and the Church have incorporated EDI into their core objectives, making every effort to eliminate racism and discrimination, to create equal opportunities and build good working relationships between people. While there are limitations to its application some steps may be taken, together with opportunities for addressing some of the key issues raised in this research.

5.3 Addressing the issues is a time and motion challenge and presupposes the availability and application of human and financial resources. To this end, thought and decisive action are imperative as key steps in an agreed and adequately funded workplan.

5.4 Finally, ample reference to discipleship awareness stresses the need for the Church to place greater emphasis on raising persons to be disciples of Christ in a way that magnifies Christian spirituality without sacrificing administrative, ecclesiological, and theological competence. The mission-driven agenda should teach new knowledge, provide critical information, and raise awareness as faith embracing discipleship and mission together with 'the other' (Luke 10:27). In an environment of change and development (Next Steps), the Circuit's dominant culture becomes aware of unconscious bias and evidently confronts a surmountable challenged in outlook.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1 Create a series of workshops to raise awareness of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion across the Circuit.**
- 6.2 Create a resource or information pack and guidance for Churches.**
- 6.3 Provide or encourage English language support or speech communication training for leadership development.**
- 6.4 Consider a special day in the calendar for Circuit-wide discipleship training.**
- 6.5 Create a role, Diversity Champion, to listen and hear existing issues with a view to enabling the Circuit to address them.**
- 6.6 Consider development of, or use of Connexional, conflict resolution pack.**
- 6.7 Encourage, enlist, and support those reluctant to step forward.**
- 6.8 Develop an EDI anti-discrimination policy.**
- 6.9 Explore links between Churches and gender and age.**
- 6.10 Explore the question and implications of being Church in Luton Town.**

**South Bedfordshire Circuit
Equality Diversity and Inclusion Project
August 31, 2019**

Appendix 1

The project was conducted primarily using qualitative methods of study and analysis thought more beneficial for producing a broad range of reliable data. To this end, I participated in an initial meeting with the Circuit Leadership Team (CLT), agreed the survey format after some amendments, and later in the process secured agreement for an unspecified number of random in-depth interviews.

Data collection of specific information through both in-depth interviews and a survey completed by enough Church representatives and individuals across the Circuit provided insightful perspectives on EDI generally and specific implications for the Circuit. Data collection was largely random as some Churches and members

appeared to have been unaware of the project. Yet, responses were regarded as ample for the purpose of exploring the issues.

This report summarises the results, paying attention also to crosscutting themes and potentially progressive ideas for consideration. The exploration encompassed 16 in-depth interviews covering both town and rural Church communities, and an analysis of 22 completed EDI survey forms duly returned.

An extension to the project, mentioned but not to date fully discussed and agreed, envisages information collection from other religious and community organisations and groups in the general geographical area. If thought necessary, this is likely to enable the Circuit to capture and use a more comprehensive data set which might inform future policies and practices. It is envisaged that this aspect constitutes a second phase on policy development.

¹ The Inclusive Methodist Church Strategy

² Blogger Daniel Lim reflects the complexities here: "The term 'people of colour' centres whiteness even as it attempts to be an affirming identity label for non-white people. The term perpetuates the idea that whiteness is the default and white people therefore have no race. Race is a special identity marker that is only assigned to people who are not white; who are the *other*. Race comes with colour. Non-white people are subsequently *of colour* by virtue of not being colour-free, white people. The term 'people of colour' situates non-white people's existence in strict relation to whiteness, rather than liberate them from it.

³ Arlington Trotman, *Black Black-led or What*, in Joel Edwards, ed., *Lets Praise Him Again*, Kingsway Publications (Eastbourne: 1992), pp. 17-28.

⁴ The term increasingly used today is "global majority heritage", referring to "black, Asian, Indigenous and people of colour," who together with BAME represents 80% of the world's population, centring the experiences and relationship between these groups as the majority to heal from racial oppression, and environmental injustice, and to work together to dismantle unjust barriers.

⁵ Black and brown people: are 4 times more likely to die in prison, police, and immigration custody than white British people; are excluded from the number of clergy and staff when these positions should at least reflect the community they serve; are failed by mainline churches because of the history of rampant racism; are twice as likely to die from Covid-19 than white British people; suffer higher levels of unemployment - 9% the highest in 2019, when 4% for white people); are over-represented at almost all stages of the criminal justice process; are disproportionately targeted by the police; are twice more likely to be imprisoned, and imprisoned longer than white British people; are nearly three times more likely to be arrested than white people; are 9 times more likely to be stopped and searched than white British people; suffer a lack of promotion and/or opportunity for education, housing; Joint Enterprise – Not Guilty by Association (JENGbA), is disproportionately used against BAME communities. Only 14% of the population are BAME or black and brown people.

⁶ Undercover job hunters reveal huge race bias in Britain's workplaces | Discrimination at work | The Guardian; racism and anti-blackness in general have been shown by social science to be part of the very fabric of our organisations, including churches. Being part of the problem means we can be part of the solution.

⁷ Bibaa and Nicole: The life after death of two sisters - BBC News

⁸ EDI group members have commented pointedly to this strategy.

⁹ Methodist statement: "Racism is a sin and contrary to the imperatives of the Gospel. Biblically, it is against all that we perceive of the unmotivated, spontaneous, and indiscriminating love of God who in Jesus Christ gave himself for all. As Christian people we believe that with the coming of Jesus Christ a new relationship was initiated between people of different origins." As St Paul says in his letter to the Ephesians (chapter 2 Verses 14-17): "For Christ himself has brought us peace by making Jews and Gentiles one people. With his own body he broke down the wall that separated them and kept them enemies ... By means of the cross he united both races into one body So, Christ came and preached the good news of peace to all..." The statement continues: "We submit that racism exists, overtly and covertly, in our country, of which the Methodist Church is a part. It is of vital importance that the church should give an unmistakably clear lead as to where it stands in this matter. As an institution, which is an integral part of national life, it must continually be giving signs and signals declaring its abhorrence and utter rejection of this incipient evil."

¹⁰ Derek Chauvin, the Minneapolis, Minnesota police officer in whose custody Mr Floyd was held in the street, while Chauvin held his knee for 9 minutes 29 seconds on Mr Floyd's neck until he was lifeless. A year later Chauvin receive a 22-year prison sentence – the very first time a police officer in such circumstance has been convicted for killing a black person. No person, psychologically, could have witnessed the killing of George Floyd, May 25, 2020, without being traumatized or at least struck by absolute revulsion, regardless of their ethnicity.

¹¹ The critics of BLM movement objects to the 2013 development of the organisation called Black Lives Matter, which advocate policies such as defunding the US police. That is seeking justice too, but by a quite different strategy from the millions, black and white, across the world in the follow-up to George Floyd's killing. This is a global protest movement calling and working together for justice and equality, valuing the lives of black and brown people as well, who are unjustly subject to death because of colour of skin and the deep inequalities Floyd suffered.

¹² There is a recognised distinction between this and what is known as cultural Christians. Anyone can be a cultural Christian. Cultural Christianity (CC) is comfortable, entertaining, club-like gatherings, and of mainly social value. In a "Christian" nation that generally adheres to Christian principles, "CC is more about outward appearance than personal relationship with Christ." See What's the Difference Between Biblical and Cultural Christianity? (crosswalk.com)

¹³ Arlington W Trotman, *Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion: Exploring the Issues* (SBC: August 2019).

¹⁴ W.E. Vine M.A. *A Comprehensive Dictionary of the Original Greek Words with their Precise Meanings for English Readers*, MacDonald Publishing Company, Virginia, page 821. Here the term '**one another**' is derived from the Greek New Testament word *allelon*, which means '**one another**, each other'; it occurs 100 times in the New Testament, approximately 59 of which are specific commands teaching us how (and how not) to relate to **one another**.

¹⁵ Hilary McD. Beckles, *Britain's Black Debt, Reparations for Caribbean Slavery and Native Genocide*, University of the West Indies Press, (Kingston Jamaica: 2013), p. 60. See video on slave code here History KS3 / KS4: The Barbados Slave Code - BBC Teach; also The Barbados Slave Code – An Analysis – Still We Rise

¹⁶ W.E. Vine MA, op cit., page 623.

¹⁷ Scholarship quoted or referred to elsewhere in this document includes Beckles, Olusoga, Akala, Walvin, Beckford, Kinouani, Hochschild, to name a few.

¹⁸ Beckles, Op. Cit., p. 59.

¹⁹ Beckles, *Ibid.*, pp.26ff. The Slave Code, an instrument of the most brutish control of humans, was first developed in Barbados in 1661 by English owners; it became the most popular model for slave owners everywhere, particularly in the Americas.

²⁰ See Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns, *Present and Participating, A place at the table*, Part One, (July: 2007).

²¹ Jean Mayland, ed., *Growing into God*, Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, (London:2003), p. 34.

²² A. Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Matthäus*, (Stuttgart: 1933), pp. 89, 543. History and divisive cultural 'norms', 'white spaces' are already atoned for in Christ. Education and political will to appropriate it require space.

²³ Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation*, Abingdon Press, (Nashville: 1996), pp. 63-4.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 47.

²⁵ See David Hume, *On National Characters* (1753); Immanuel Kant, *On the Different Races of Men* (1775); trans. SW. Dyde, G W F Hegel, *Philosophy of Right*, Batouche Books, (Ontario: 2001). John Locke, nevertheless, contributed to the American Declaration of Independence. See Theresa Richardson, *John Locke, The Myth of Race in America: Demythologizing the Paradoxes of the Enlightenment as Visited in the Present*, Ball State University, (2011).

²⁶ Jean Mayland, Op. Cit.

²⁷ Working to include others in our light often also becomes an exercise in excluding what we see as their darkness, blinded by whatever good we believe we must do.

²⁸ Robert Beckford, *God the Gangs*, An Urban Toolkit for Those Who Won't Be Sold Out, Bought Out, or Scared Out, Darton, Longman and Todd, (London: 2004), p. 7.

²⁹ David Olusoga, Op. Cit. See Adan Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost, A story of Greed, Terror and Heroism in Colonial Africa*, Picador Classic, Paperback, (March 2019); James Walvin, *A Short History of Slavery*, Penguin Books, (London: 2007).

³⁰ Volf, Op. Cit., p. 37.

³¹ <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/views-of-the-church/racism/> The Inclusive Methodist Church which can be found at: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/the-methodist-church/the-inclusive-methodist-church/the-inclusive-methodist-church-strategy/>

³² Please make use where necessary of the Connexional Strategy for Justice, Dignity and Solidarity: working towards a fully inclusive Methodist Church

³³ There are presently attempts to discourage the use of the word "race" largely because it has no positive scientific origin or contributes to positive relations.

³⁴ Black lives and black history resources - BBC Teach

³⁵ <https://www.sheffieldmethodist.org/news/events-courses/zoom-webinars/being-an-inclusive-church.html>
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