

Paper G2

Towards being an anti-racist Church

Mission Committee

Basic information

Contact name and email address	Sarah Lane Cawte, Convenor of Mission Committee slanecawte@gmail.com Karen Campbell, Secretary for Global and Intercultural Ministries karen.campbell@urc.org.uk
Action required	Decision.
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council resolves: (i) Acting on behalf of General Assembly, to commit the United Reformed Church to a journey towards being an anti-racist Church, identifying barriers within all parts of its life - including local, synod and Assembly structures and processes, and initiating strategies to combat racism within its own body and in the wider community/society. (ii) To instruct the mission committee to explore and develop initiatives to address the barriers within our structures, and to develop resources to equip and empower the United Reformed Church to begin the process of education and change in all parts of its life. (iii) To instruct the mission committee to report on progress to the March 2021 meeting of Mission Council, and to future meetings of Mission Council and General Assembly, including any specific objectives identified.

Summary of content

Subject and aim(s)	A commitment to working towards being an actively anti-racist Church.
Main points	Building on the URC's history of racial justice work and racial justice awareness to commit the Church to a journey beyond 'not racist' to actively identifying and addressing racism in every aspect of its life.
Previous relevant documents	Assembly resolutions as detailed in the paper.
Consultation has taken place with...	General Secretary, equalities committee.

Summary of impact

Financial	Costs to Assembly are covered by the mission committee budget.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	This links with work done by CTE and CWM. Interest in the resolution has been expressed by Methodist colleagues.

1. The United Reformed Church stands in solidarity with the struggles of black people (of all ethnicities) - in the UK and globally - for freedom, justice and equality.
2. The killing of George Floyd in the US in May 2020, and the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on black communities, has highlighted the continuing evil of systemic racial injustice around the world. We have heard the impassioned outcry against this current situation, with many people - both black and white - seeking change and declaring that Black Lives Matter. We have sought to listen to those voices.
3. Mission Council, November 2020, unreservedly affirms that Black Lives – the lives of black, Asian and minority ethnic people - do matter in the life, work and existence of our Church. At the same time, we recognise that we are an imperfect body, existing in a world shaped by white supremacy. We are repeatedly reminded - by voices both within and outside the Church - that our Church, too, has been shaped by racist ideals. We lament the truth that many aspects of our lived reality do not reflect the values to which we aspire - values seen in the Word of God as revealed through the life of Jesus Christ and through our holy scriptures.
4. We have sought to recognise and address this disparity over many years and point to our long history of promoting learning and positive action aimed at bringing about racial justice in our Church and world. Previous resolutions include:
 - 1980 - urging local churches to study the question of racism, both locally and nationally, and to contribute to the creation of a multi-racial society in Britain;
 - 1994 - calling the URC to prayer and action to find ways to listen to the voices of people of different cultural backgrounds, and the adoption of an Equal Opportunities Policy;
 - 1996 - creation of a post to develop multi-racial and multi-cultural ministry; and
 - 2007 - recognising the continuing legacy of the transatlantic slave trade and committing ourselves to the continuing struggle for justice for all who are oppressed.
5. We affirm the statement released by the CTE Presidents on 28 July 2020, calling all churches to travel together on the journey of racial justice, and we recommit the United Reformed Church to addressing injustices both within our church life and in wider society.
6. At the present time, we are actively engaging with the Council for World Mission's (CWM) Legacies of Slavery project and Core Group Report 2018. We reaffirm the work of the URC Legacies of Slavery task group, appointed by the mission committee to help the Church respond meaningfully to the issues and findings

raised by the CWM document through a process of local church and synod engagement, with a view to bringing recommendations to General Assembly 2022.

7. Building on our past and current work, Mission Council commits the whole United Reformed Church to embark on a journey beyond good intentions, beyond being 'not racist', towards active anti-racist living. This commitment is neither an initiative nor a project, but a pledge for our future existence as one body with many parts - valuing the presence and gifts of all our sisters and brothers equally, and affirming each individual as being equally made in the image of God.

Mission Council resolves:

- (i) Acting on behalf of General Assembly, to commit the United Reformed Church to a journey towards being an anti-racist Church, identifying barriers within all parts of its life - including local, synod and Assembly structures and processes, and initiating strategies to combat racism within its own body and in the wider community/society.**
- (ii) To instruct the mission committee to explore and develop initiatives to address the barriers within our structures, and to develop resources to equip and empower the United Reformed Church to begin the process of education and change in all parts of its life.**
- (iii) To instruct the mission committee to report on progress to the March 2021 meeting of Mission Council, and to future meetings of Mission Council and General Assembly, including any specific objectives identified.**