

# Diversity Awareness Conversations

seven conversation points on enabling  
greater awareness and good practice  
in growing inclusive habits



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United Reformed Church

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## Purpose of the Diversity Awareness Course

We continue to seek to be and work towards an inclusive church that celebrates diversity, equality of opportunities, and a community that respects difference

These series of conversation points are aimed:

- to help us build on existing knowledge, develop greater awareness and understanding of diversity issues within the context of an inclusive church
- to enable us to become more intentional, proactive and effective in building equality action in keeping with beliefs and practices of the United Reformed Church
- to encourage us to identify and become more proactive in overcoming ways we may still (knowingly or unknowingly) participate in practices that are exclusionary.

To achieve the above aims we invite you to work through these seven (7) conversation points exploring identity; diversity; culture; prejudice/power/privilege; policies and practices; structures; and intersections.

Suggested timing for each session (2 hours):

<i>Introduction</i>	5 minutes
<i>Conversation Starter</i>	15 minutes
<i>Main Activity</i>	30 minutes
<i>Case Study</i>	30 minutes
<i>Witness Script</i>	20 minutes
<i>Further Exploration</i>	15 minutes
<i>Prayer/Meditation</i>	5 minutes

Please note:

Session 1: The timing may need to be slightly altered to include setting out purpose and aims of the course and some discussion about the Ground Rules

Session 7: Will need to be managed to include an evaluation at the end of the Course

## Notes for those Facilitating the Conversations

### Working Guidelines in facilitating

- Try to work with at least one other facilitator. It is advisable that the facilitators complement each other in gender, ethnicity, theological perspective, etc. It is important to develop a teamwork model of working.
- Value and draw on participants' experience as much as possible.
- Ensure that ground rules are clarified, agreed on and adhered to.
- Be careful not to use discriminatory language that could offend on the grounds of race, gender, disability and sexual orientation.
- Be flexible, and use other material where appropriate.
- Be sensitive to people who may have suffered abuse and who may find memories and feelings of such abuse surfacing in the sessions. If requested, identify a person with counselling skills who could be available to support this person.
- Prepare carefully for each session, ensuring that you have all required materials, and that all equipment is in working order.
- Enjoy the conversations. Do not be over-anxious, remember that God is guiding all our lives.

### The role of the Facilitator/ Trainer

- Acts as a friend and consultant throughout the session/workshop/ course.
- Asks open-ended questions to check that learning is taking place.
- Acts as a 'bouncing board' for ideas and mirror to reflect the group experience
- Responds to questions/problems by helping the group members to discover solutions for themselves.
- Gives encouragement by helping participants identify achievements in learning

**NB:** It is not appropriate for a facilitator to:

- Act as an expert.
- Get drawn into issues beyond the boundaries of the course
  - (Do not allow a session to degenerate into a cosy chat or gossip session).
- Be judgemental (challenge behaviour not the person).

### Facilitating and Effective Listening

Listening is key to good facilitating. And listening is an art, a skill, as well as a discipline which always needs self-control. But what is involved in listening? Listening is obviously based on hearing and understanding what others are saying. Hearing becomes listening only when we pay attention to what is being said and follow it very closely.



There are several barriers to effective listening, which could include: our minds being preoccupied; prejudice towards the person in the group who is speaking; a noisy or distracting environment; an emotional reaction in you, resulting in you possibly tuning off from the speaker, thus losing contact with him/her; not paying attention to non-verbal signs, gestures, or hesitations; or a failure to pick up the feeling level.

Necessary skills for effective listening will include: perception, paraphrasing, clarity, perception checking and evaluation, all of which we develop with practice, as facilitators

### Competencies to develop

Facilitators/trainers bring into any session many competencies at different levels. The facilitator needs to recognise these competencies in themselves, as well as opportunities to develop them.

Here is a suggested list of competencies we should try to work towards, develop and demonstrate. This is by no means an exhaustive list

- setting appropriate aims and objectives for training.
- planning training, taking on board participants' needs
- carrying out a programme of training.
- working within an equal opportunities framework.
- recognising participants' specific needs in a relationship to current or future practice.
- try to work with a co-facilitator and develop a teamwork approach to the training.
- assessing training programmes and their effectiveness as tools for learning.
- mindful of the difference between training, teaching and speaking.
- able to adapt and make best use of the physical training space.
- deploying different methods to the use of content and context.
- selecting appropriate resources (people and materials).
- able to adapt training materials to meet needs of the group.
- employ a range of techniques to lead/guide discussion.
- learn ways of knowing how and when to stop discussions.
- evaluating training programmes and the learning as a result.
- keep abreast of new developments and information.
- nurture own spiritual development.
- recognise the added dimensions of race awareness training.
- encourage more people to get involved with training – link up with others.
- negotiating and building a learning agreement with participants.
- acknowledging and building on prior experience of participants.
- ensuring effective use of time in any given session.
- demonstrating appropriate facilitator/behaviour.
- fostering of Christian values and attitudes in the context of adult learning.

## Appendix (Resources for each session)

In some of the sessions facilitators will be directed to resources referred to in the sessions. These can be found the section titled appendices (pages 40-61).

However, not all the resources found in the Appendix are referred to. Under the section 'additional' you will some resources which facilitators may find helpful and can be used. An indication will be given as to which of the sessions these may apply to.

### Prayer

Redeeming God-who-beckons-and-accompanies,  
journey with us as we walk  
into unknown and unfamiliar landscape,  
draw us to listen for your voice  
stir us to speak your prophetic word  
and empowered by your maverick Spirit,  
grant us the courage we need  
to trust, listen, speak,  
and to let go into  
your way of abundant grace. Amen [Michael Jagessar]

[Resource Working Group: Sandra Ackroyd, John Campbell, Michael Jagessar, Maria Mills]

## Conversation 1      Who Am I? My Identity

### Introduction

We all have different physical traits/features/skin colour/hair/eyes/height etc., raised in different environments or work in various communities. All these things, including relationships with family members, friends, work colleagues, churches etc. can affect and help shape our values, attitudes and practices. But, is identity simply a mixture of nature and nurture?

Our Christian understanding of the identity of all human beings has to be based on the creative act of God, who made human beings in God's image and likeness. At the same time, relationships with significant people can affect our personalities, impact on our ability to trust, express love and intimacy, as well as the ways we view the world in all its diversity.

### Conversation Starter

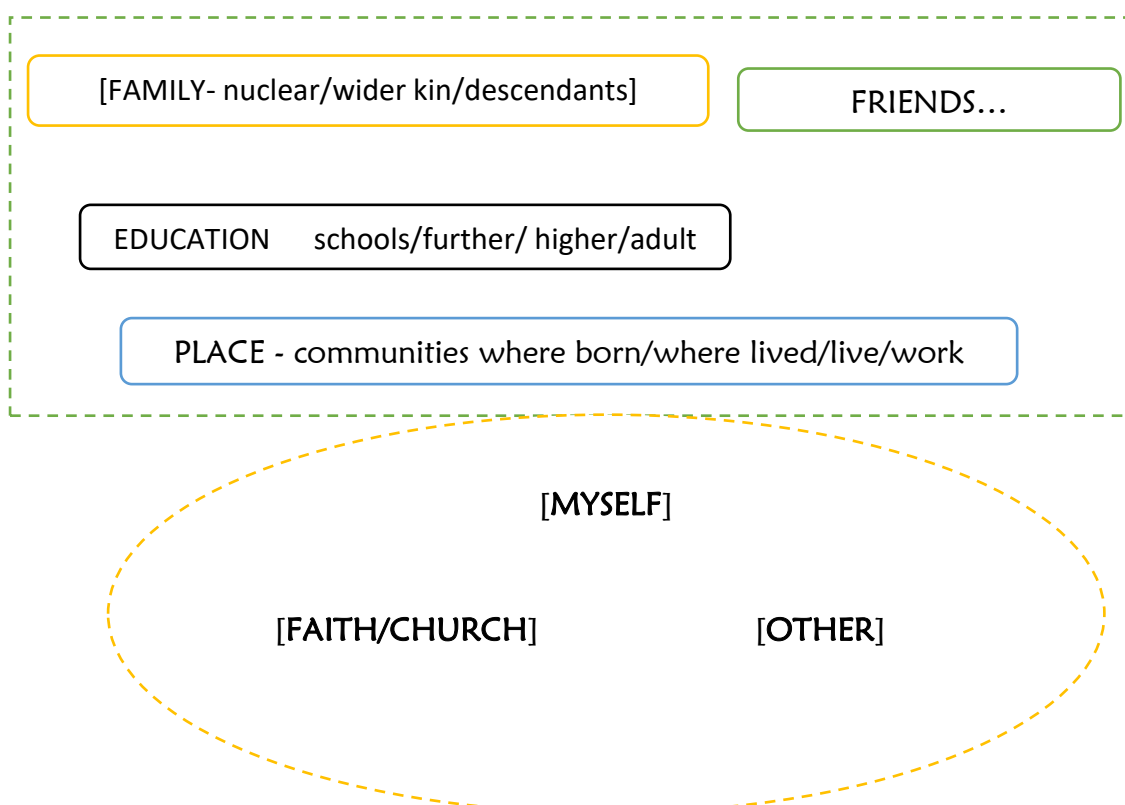
Explore the following questions in pairs and then share any key experiences in the whole group

- Where did you go to school when you were 5?
- Who were you closest to when you were 10?
- What did you enjoy doing when you were 15?
- What are you good at now?

### Main Activity

How would we describe and understand our own identities?

Maybe the following could help you explore this question.



### Method for the Activity

- Work individually, looking at the suggested descriptors above and responding to the initial question above (Q1)
- Share in pairs or small groups, your findings and begin to explore the questions (Q 2,3,4,5) below.
  - Then come together as a large group. Ask each pair or small group to share any insights they have gained whilst working through this process
- Explore the final question (Q 6) together.

#### Questions

How have the above helped to shape my life?  
 What values and attitudes have been passed on to me?  
 What values and attitudes have I decided to take on myself?  
 What have been positive (life giving) and which have been negative (life restricting)?  
 What other influences have contributed to my identity?

#### Further question

Did this activity help you to understand more about your identity? If so, in what ways?

In exploring your identity and listening to the insights of others, did this enhance your appreciation of others? How?

### *Case Studies*

#### Case Study 1

A Role Play (exploring identity) involving 3 characters

- English Friend
- Jamaican British young person
- Parent

A young person whose parents are Jamaican, but was born and grew up in England, is put in a difficult position of choosing which football team to support when the two countries play one another.

English Friend:	You looking forward to the match later?
Jamaican British young person:	Yeh...England verses Jamaica...
English friend:	Who are you going to support?



Parent: I hope you are going to support Jamaica. After all, your grandparents are from Jamaica and so are we!

Jamaican British young person: Yeh...I know...but...

English friend: So what! you're British! You were born here and now you live here, you've got to support England, they're your country.

**[Match begins...]**

Parent: Come on Jamaica!!! Come on, you need to attack more.

English friend: Go England! Go England! What do you reckon then?

Jamaican British young person: I thought I knew who I wanted to win, but now I just don't know.

QUESTIONS

- What issues of identity are raised in this brief role-play?
- Does the matter of different generations influence this situation? and if so, what wider issues could this expose?
- What may be some of the unspoken assumptions here?

Case Study 2

My name is Joanne. I am doing a degree course at a local university. I have met a group of girls on the course with whom I get on with well. There are many positive things in my life which contribute to my identity and how I see myself. One is my love of music of different kinds, classical and modern. I was happy to discover that these new friends also liked music. I learnt that they often arranged to go to music concerts at week-ends. They never ask me to join them. I am blind. I have overheard one of these friends explain to someone else after a lecture, that Joanne would probably like to go to the next concert but it would be difficult for her to get around and travel, because she cannot see.

I felt hurt by this. I was being excluded from doing something I really enjoy. I was missing out on the actual concerts as well as the social time with my friends before or after the event. In the eyes of these friends it felt as if my identity was being defined by my disability. I felt as if my whole identity was not being recognised, resulting in me experiencing exclusion and rejection. I felt diminished.

QUESTIONS

- What issues of identity are raised in this case-study?
- How important is, 'how we see ourselves'?
- What wider issues does this case- study expose?

*Witness Script* - biblical text (Genesis 1 vv1-27)

We learn that the first book in the Hebrew Bible speaks to a God of new beginnings, opening with two different stories of creation of the world. Genesis includes stories of the first family (chapters 3-4); the first city: (chapters 11 v.1-9); and the beginnings of the Hebrew people (chapters 12-50). The creation story, as told in Genesis 1 is patterned on a story found in Mesopotamia. And the creation story in Genesis 2 reflects creation stories from ancient Egypt. The story line in Genesis moves from a universal story of the beginning (chapters 1-5) and re-beginning of humanity (chapters 6-11) to a particular people, the descendants of Abraham and Sarah (chapters 12-50). In this book, many different nations, cultures and ethnicities are mentioned and engaged.

It may be helpful, in reflecting on our identity, to consider the nature of God and how this has been portrayed by biblical writers. The first depictions of God are masculine. In chapter 1 (v5), we read: 'God called the light day and the darkness he called night'. At the same time God's spirit is often represented as feminine in different places throughout the Hebrew Bible. We can reasonably deduce, that humans were created in the divine image of God who is both male and female. In the Christian scriptures (NT) however, the spirit is referred to as neither masculine nor feminine.

Further Questions:

- What has shaped our identity and person, not only in who we were and are, but also in the potential to become?
- Does our identity include realities that are universal, particular (related to a group), or linked to place? What else is involved?
- Does our ongoing understanding of who we are and our identity, help us grow into new areas of faith and experience?

*Further Exploration*

Poem 'Check out me History' by John Agard (This poem can be found on line <http://genius.com/John-agard-checking-out-me-history-annotated> )

- Read aloud and discuss the implications for identity and how the learning of history impacts on identity.

*Prayer/Meditation*

**What is this life?**

What is this life if full of care?  
 We have no time to sit and think  
 no time to reflect on who we are  
 to work out where there is a link  
*So why are we here?*

Who are we in this creation?

Embracing beauty, love and peace  
in our life span's whole duration,  
consider all our human dreams  
*So why are we here?*

Why are we here, what part to play?  
Alongside all our different neighbours,  
living our little lives each day,  
building bricks of all endeavours.  
*So why are we here?*

When shall we celebrate all life  
that lives upon this miracle earth?  
The throb of life, though constant strife,  
for better things we'll always search.  
*So why are we here?*

The human spirit can't be destroyed,  
even though we maim and kill.  
New life comes, renews the void  
God works in us, so we are filled.  
*So why are we here?*

New generations emerge with grace  
to bring new hope, unique inventions  
that enable us to hold, embrace  
in fresh light, mould your new creation.  
That's why we're here!

(Sandra Ackroyd)

## Conversation 2

## Diversity and Difference

### Introduction

Recognizing that 'Diversity 'suggests the quality of being varied and different', in this session we aim to affirm diversity and difference and to acknowledge that difference is not a problem.

Putting negative value judgments on those differences is to generalize, limit and deny people's full humanity.

To some people, diversity is synonymous with multiculturalism which involves addressing the experiences of ethnic and linguistic minority groups.

To others the focus will be on categories of stratification or on treating all different groups equally and fairly (such as disability, youth etc.), but do not take on board the social hierarchy associated with human diversity.

To other people, diversity implies the whole range of human experience.



### Conversation Starter

#### An exercise

1. My name is.....
2. Three words that describe me are.....
3. To me difference means.....
4. To me sameness means.....
5. When a work colleague/friend makes a biased statement, I.....
6. Conflict makes me feel.....
7. As a person, I am best at.....
8. I want to be the kind of person who.....

Write responses individually and then share insights in the group.

### Main activity

[Scenarios to explore diversity and difference]

Explore these scenarios, in 2 groups.

- Group one explores scenario 1. Group two looks at scenario 2.
- Let one person read out the scenario to the group. Spend a minute thinking about the situation described. Then respond to the questions for both scenarios.

- Following the group discussion, all gather for each group to share their main insights.

**Scenario 1** – a conversation set in the context of an interview about the church.

Elder: I sometimes wonder if we spend too much time worrying about things in the church that aren't the most important things. We seem to get hung up on issues like the right language to use in church; whether we have the right access for people in wheel chairs who do not come to our church; the numbers game asking if we have enough women on this committee and that committee or whether we are considering the needs of children. Do these issues matter? It is teaching and preaching and keeping the church building together that should matter. All other things are too much to think about.

**Scenario 2** – a conversation in a conference centre

I like the fact that this is a diverse group of people. It's been great to hear people from other cultures and nationalities talk about their experience of God. But I have found it very difficult in the dining room. The black people sit together and I don't feel I can join them. Don't they want to mix? They even talk to each other sometimes in their own language.

Questions for both scenarios

- What, if anything, in the scenario causes you concern about the attitudes that are revealed, that you think might warrant further attention?
- How would you describe and name attitudes that are causing you concern?
- Can you identify questions that would help you explore the issues raised further?

*Case-Studies*

**1. Embracing different generations**

City URC is proud that it embraces different generations, including a group of young people 14-21 years. The church organ is the only instrument played in church services and it is played for every kind of hymn. The young people have expressed the idea that they would like the church to use a wider variety of musical instruments in worship (percussion, drums, guitars, keyboard). A few of the young people said they could play some of these. The request came to the church meeting where various views were expressed. Some, headed by the organist argued that the organ is the best and right

QUESTIONS

- What may be possible consequences if the young people's idea is dismissed out of hand?
- How could this situation be handled in a way that showed these young people that their idea would be worth being seriously considered?
- How would their idea bring greater diversity and inclusion in church worship?

instrument for Christian worship and that is what everyone is used to. It was suggested that maybe the young people could practice their instruments to play in the church concert.

## 2. Diversity and Committees

The convener of a URC committee has received the revised URC guidelines for greater inclusion of different kinds of people in our church practice. He makes these guidelines available for the committee members to read. One member raises the point that their committee needs more members and that perhaps they should see if any BAME people and a few more women could become members of this committee. The convener replies: 'I do not know any BAME people'. Others respond in the same way. The committee remains depleted with no new people.

### QUESTIONS

- What are the stumbling blocks here, to greater inclusion taking place?
- Share reflections on the way this committee seems to be working and how they could have achieved greater diversity.

### *Witness Script*

[Biblical texts: Acts Chapter 13: 1-4 and 11:19-26]

This narrative presents a truly diverse multicultural church, at Antioch. The purpose of the Acts of the Apostles is to show how the Gospel reached both Jews and Gentiles through the Roman Empire and so became a universal religion which appeared totally inclusive. From the start of a Jerusalem Church which consisted of Jews only, a new Church had to be found which was itself inclusive as the base for such a universal mission. So the early chapters in Acts show how the Holy Spirit found gifted people (Paul and Barnabas), and also a Church for the moment.

Antioch was a truly diverse multicultural church with Jews, Gentiles, people from North African countries and people from different countries around the Mediterranean. Recognising the potential of growing a culturally diverse church, leaders from these groups, including Simeon (called 'the black') and Lucius from Cyrene, laid hands on Paul and Barnabas and sent them off to develop the great mission among the Gentiles.

The challenge for the Church today is whether we are fit for purpose. Are we the kind of Church that is up for the challenge for God's inclusive, generous and open hearted mission needed today?

### Further Exploration

Read and discuss the paper 'Guidelines for Presentations at URC gatherings' (revised version 2014). [See the appendix]

How could the implementation of these guidelines enhance a greater understanding of diversity, and bring about a deeper sense of belonging and inclusiveness for a greater number of people?

### Prayer/Meditation

#### Encountering Difference

You, Lord, are always ready to lift us up  
Whether we are short or tall,  
Black or white, rich or poor.

You know how stubborn we can be,  
Often too proud to change  
And to walk your way.

And as a church too, Lord  
We are often reluctant to take risks  
And embrace new things.

Into our messy lives  
You sent your son  
To show us how to step out boldly,  
Walking your way.

Lord,  
Cause us to be intentional  
About embracing difference  
And courageous about encountering you



[Tessa Henry-Robinson, *Hidden in Plain Sight* Prayer Handbook 2016.

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## Conversation 3 Uncovering the 3 P's (privilege, power and prejudices)

### *Introduction*

The common definition of *privilege* refers to the advantage, right and favour granted to or enjoyed by, an individual or group of people, which usually means an advantage. Privilege can sometimes refer to an invisible package of unearned assets that a person can count on cashing in every day which could impact on social class, disability, gender, sexuality or age etc. In exploring racial justice, this principle also relates to 'white privilege'. However, it is not the only form of privilege.

*Power* is the capacity to have control, authority and influence over others. In the context of cultural competence and white racism awareness, social power here refers to the ability of the dominant culture in a society to have control, authority and influence over people (for instance, women and those we refer to as BAME). If such power is linked to prejudice, then this outcome can result in marginalisation and discrimination. Power is often used to enforce one's prejudice to keep others from enjoying gains and awards in the society.

*Prejudice* shows itself in acquired beliefs and opinions that result in a person or group of people to be biased for or against members of a particular group. However, prejudice is normally related to making negative pre-judgments about others which are not based on real facts.

*Privilege, power and prejudice* are very much interwoven. As a combined trinity, the three p's form a powerful force which when experienced by people, are likely to cause immense suffering whether it be on a personal level or within institutions and organisations in our society.

### *Conversation Starter*

Invite participants (in pairs) to reflect on the following: What are some of assumptions I make of others? How do they relate to my own prejudices? What do they reveal about me? What are some of the visible and invisible privileges I benefit from?

### *Main Activity*

#### Examining definitions

Method:

- Read the suggestions in the paper 'examining definitions' for the words, prejudice, discrimination, racism, anti-racism and then tick the definition you favour [see appendix for this session]
- Participants will then share their thoughts/notes and the facilitator will record the points suggested for each category on flip chart paper.

**NOTE:** Discussion is more important than trying to agree exactly on definitions. This exercise is not about right or wrong answers but should be useful as a lead-in to further understanding of expressions and manifestations of prejudice and discrimination.



The appendix (Session 3) showing *a glossary of terms* of a wider group of words can also be useful for reference.

### Levels of Discrimination

Method:

- In the whole group, invite participants to share all the different ways people can discriminate against others and develop conversation regarding different levels of discrimination.
- Draw out suggestions such as: speaking against; avoidance; physical attack/bullying; extermination.

Question:

- Does power, privilege, or/and prejudice play a part in these behaviours and if so, in what ways? [refer to the appendix 'Anti-racism Iceberg']

### Understanding and Leveraging Privilege

Method:

- Access online and read the following essay by Robin Pedrelli at the following URL <http://inclusionlearningloop.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/Recognizing-and-Leveraging-Privilege.pdf>
- Reflecting on the article and 'examples of privilege' (found in the appendix), identify a few instances where you have privilege, power or a significant level of influence:
  - Describe how.
  - Is privilege unfair? Why?
  - Why do conversations about privilege tend to look at male and white privilege?
  - How does one recognise one's own power or privilege?
  - Is it possible to deploy this privilege for the empowering of others? How? What would you need to do?

### *Case Studies*

As you reflect on these case studies, consider how privilege and power may also be at work.

### **Prejudice?**

A same sex couple approaches the church and asks to have their baby baptised (surrogate child). The minister questions them about why they have chosen this church as they have no previous contact with this church. The couple say that they looked at the website which states that infant baptism is carried out and they saw the photographs and liked the sound and look of the church. The minister brings this to the elders meeting who say that as the couple have had no previous contact with the

church, it would be inappropriate for them to offer baptism. However, they would be prepared to offer a blessing service. The minister visits the family and tells them the decision of the elders. The couple are upset and question as to whether this decision was made because they had no previous contact with this church. They wondered whether it was because they were a same-sex couple. They mentioned to the minister that the website did not state that only children of those attached to the church already would be considered and that they were embarrassed by the way this was being handled. They point out that there is nothing about same sex couples on the website anywhere, including civil ceremony blessings or inclusive language in the services. They say that it appears to them that the elders may be homophobic. The couple decide to write to the synod office about this situation.

Questions:

- How should the church follow up this situation?
- How should the synod respond to the couple and to the church?

### Exclusion?

My name is Jeremy. I am a black young person who is limbless. As I try to live my life to the full, I face obstacles daily, including difficulties with accessing the transport system and public buildings in a wheelchair here in London. In 2014, taking part in a charity sponsored event around the City of London I found that some of the churches we needed to enter did not have wheelchair access. In the same year I was returning from a national youth conference and was taken to a railway station with two others from my church. We needed to come to this station because of restricted Sunday train services. When we reached this station we discovered that there was no wheelchair access to platforms and no lift. Our driver then travelled miles to find another station that I could use. Normally, day to day, I find buses and bus drivers mainly very helpful but occasionally had to wait for a long time at a bus stop if parents with buggies board the bus. Another difficulty I find, more than physical blocks, is when someone I do not know, will come up to me and start asking questions about me, to the person I am with at the time. They do not speak to me. It is as if I am not there. Do they assume that because I have a physical disability, everything about me must be disabled?

Questions:

- What are the issues identified here, regarding experiences of exclusion?
- What can be the effect for someone on the receiving end of mental and social exclusion?

*Witness Script (I Corinthians chapters 8-10)*

They make me mad. It wasn't an easy thing to do – speaking up at church meeting to say how offensive I found the way our church leaders were behaving. I was deeply offended that the big leaders of our church here in Corinth still regularly ate meat that they must have known had been sacrificed in one of the many pagan temples of our city. I could tell from the low murmurings when I spoke that many others saw it the way I did, even if they weren't prepared to speak up too. Many of us slaves and former slaves had only ever had a chance to eat meat at pagan festivals. For us, to eat meat was to go back to the old ways and was a repudiation of Jesus. And yet, without any shame or secrecy, our church leaders were continuing to buy temple-sacrificed meat in the meat market and serving it to their guests at their grand dinner parties. It wasn't right. It wasn't Christian. And someone had to speak up.

I should have known it would go badly. They fobbed me off. They offered me politeness and charm. They came out with all their smooth philosophical arguments. The pagan gods don't exist, they said. There is only one God. There isn't a problem. Brother, be a good Christian and sit down and shut up, they implied, you don't understand these things. It was as if us poorer and enslaved members of the fellowship didn't matter. Our deeply-held opinions could just be batted aside and ignored. Why did their opinions count and not ours? There were more of us than them! Was it their money, or their education, or their ability to talk fancy, or their business connections and status in our city? Could they not see that the very thing that attracted so many of us to Jesus was the promise of a new way of being human where privilege and power would not count for anything?

I met with others and we decided to alert Paul to our problem. Eventually, he wrote about it in one of his letters to our church. At first I was alarmed at his response – he seemed to be taking sides with the church leaders and their 'no problem here' approach. But I should have had more faith in old Paul! Even as he agreed with them that there is only one God, he was challenging their attitudes of superiority. He laid out his case that building a new community where each was valued, all were welcomed, all views considered, all hurts felt and mutual love and understanding was nurtured was more important than winning any argument.

He didn't fully accept my idea that it was a betrayal of Jesus to eat pagan meat. He wanted all of us to show some give and take with each other. He wasn't going to hand me a victory in my little battle with the leaders about meat, but he was doing something which was far more important in the long run. He was inviting us all to keep building a practical fellowship without privileged groups, without power imbalances, with no place for prejudices. He was begging us to be a fellowship where we could keep working at getting along in Christ even when we didn't agree on everything, but no-one could pull rank on anyone else. There was to be no superiority of ethnic origin, or gender, or wealth, or social status, or education, or holiness... We're not there yet in Corinth, but I have a deep sense that Jesus wants us to keep working for that. Thanks, Paul. Spot on.

### *Further Exploration*

The Anti-Racism Iceberg (See appendix)

Take time to read the paper and explore the questions:

- What are examples of 'Oppressive Power' that are visible, overt, racist acts and behaviour?
- What are examples of 'White Power' that relate to societal systems that are in place that appear to maintain the interests and standards of white people?
- What are examples of 'Identity Power' relating to the power of racism to shape understandings of ourselves
- In each of these cases, how are the lives of people being affected?

### *Prayer/Meditation*

#### **Powerful God,**

You struggle with us  
And against us  
So that we may be changed  
Into people whom you have named  
Who have seen you face to face.

We pray for all who struggle for justice  
In the face of unjust powers.  
Give them strength to persist in their demands  
And make the powerful act for them

We pray for people who exercise power  
In the face of intractable problems.  
Give them ears to hear the cry of the powerless  
And wisdom and courage to govern justly

God of the struggle  
Give to us all  
Persistence and perception  
Courage and strength  
And faith when justice is a long time coming

Powerful God  
You struggle with us  
And against us  
So that we may be changed  
Into people whom you have named  
Who have seen you face to face



[from *Shining Faces*, Prayer Handbook Advent 2000-2001. © URC, used with permission]

## Conversation 4 Challenging and Changing Cultural Practice

### Introduction

The term 'culture' usually refers to behaviours, traditions, customs and ways of life; e.g. religion, food, language; belonging to a particular group of people. Referring to 'The Cultural Iceberg' resource paper, we learn that these things are easily observable with touch, taste, smell, sound but only account for 10% of culture. These are explicitly learned, conscious, easily changeable and involve objective knowledge. However, you could say that this is the tip of the iceberg because the majority of aspects of culture amount to 90%. They include core values, beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, priorities and perceptions. Unlike the 10% cultural aspects, these 90% are difficult to observe, being implicitly learned, unconscious, difficult to change and relate to subjective knowledge. They are deep and internal.

Sometimes people make assumptions or develop ideas about another cultural community without understanding the internal or deep *cultural influences* that make up the majority of that culture's values and beliefs.

### Conversation Starter

Peruse 'the Cultural Iceberg' diagram (see appendix) and individually draw a cultural iceberg for yourself (one that relates to you).

- share aspects of your drawing with one or two other people

### Main Activity

[Exercise - 'Cultural Awareness: I know a culture']

- Method: Follow the instructions on this handout [see appendix]
  - During the exercise, draw out the fact that it is easy to see one's own culture as normal.
  - Allow comments on the poem 'Dear White Friend' [see appendix]

#### QUESTIONS

- How do we define 'normal'?
- Which aspects of our own cultures would we refer to as being 'normal'?
- What happens with the concept of 'normal' when we interact with people of different cultures on a regular basis?

### Case Studies

[drawing out experiences of cross cultural and inter-cultural issues]

#### 1. Inter-generational

Jermaine and Ricardo are preparing a Christian rap to do during the church youth service. Whilst practising at Ricardo's home, his grandmother asked what they were

doing. When they told her, she was shocked and said they could not do such a thing in church as it would offend people. Ricardo told her that their youth leaders encouraged them and gave permission to prepare this rap as part of the service. The grandmother was even more upset to hear this.

Questions:

- Why would the grandmother make this kind of response?
- What are the possible ways forward from this situation?

## 2. Inter-ethnic

A church minister who was white, was at a regional committee meeting, discussing how to find new people to serve on committees of various kinds. The minister was asked by the committee convenor if he knew people who might be interested in serving in this way especially as he was minister of a 'fairly large' multicultural church. The minister replied, 'the white people are too elderly and the black people would not fit in culturally to our committee system.'

Questions:

- What could 'not fit in culturally' imply in this situation?
- Should members of the committee have responded to this statement made by the minister and if so, what might they say which could move this situation forward?

### *Witness Script*

[Scriptural texts: Mark 7: 24-29; Matthew 15: 21-28 (The Syro-phoenician Woman)].

How we read and interpret biblical texts is strongly influenced by our cultural contexts and our location in life and in society. The story of the Syro-phoenician or Canaanite woman can help us understand the impact such things as identity and cultural boundaries can have on how we interpret the Scriptures and how we apply that interpretation to our multicultural and inter-cultural relationships in the church today. This woman is identified and set apart from Jesus, by her gender, ethnicity, religion, and class. It is clear from this encounter that she is determined to challenge Jesus by crossing both her own and Jesus' boundaries for the sake of her daughter. Jesus himself is challenged to broaden his vision of God's saving grace and in the end affirms her faith and her human dignity.

### Reflecting

- Name any challenges for the Church today that you see in this narrative
- Name any unhelpful boundaries that exist in the church that you believe need to be challenged, in order to nurture cross-cultural and inter-cultural relationships

### *Further Exploration*

Explore together the paper, "Aspiring beyond good intentions: Multicultural Church, Intercultural Habit" (See Appendix – United Reformed Church, 2012)

Encourage participants to read through the paper on their own, share responses, develop discussion drawing on phrases such as: Comfort zones; mutually inconvenienced for the sake of others and the Gospel; seeking habits that re-dress power in-balance; developing habits of self-examination and life-long learning and reflection.

#### QUESTION:

- How do any of these issues relate to our own situations (employment; committees; church structures; local churches)?

### *Prayer/Meditation*

God of all peoples, languages and cultures,  
empower us to live  
your way of compassion and community,  
and to go forward together  
with one another and with Jesus.  
May the fresh winds of the Spirit  
move us in new directions we need to take,  
so that your church might truly reflect  
the multi-coloured wonder of your creation. Amen



[taken from *We Belong – Celebrating Cultural Diversity and Living Hospitality*.  
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## Conversation 5      Working within Structures

### *Introduction*

Structure in organisations, institutions and work places, can unknowingly or even knowingly, marginalise people from different groups, which will give them a disadvantage in being able to participate effectively in their organisation or work place etc. And, people in an organisation can be failed by that organisation for different reasons.

As we reflect on structures (of which Church is not exempted), it may be helpful to look at the definition of 'Institutional Racism'. While this applies to racism, the principles equally affect forms of marginalisation such as gender, sexual orientation, age, social class, or disability. Some groups can begin with a disadvantage whether it be a work place or a voluntary organisation.

Institutional racism is defined as:

‘the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amounts to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people’

**The crucial point here** is the failure of an organisation to provide appropriate and professional service to certain groups of vulnerable people who are often discriminated against (as per the above list). Institutional racism operates at the levels of attitudes, actions of personnel; policies; practices; foundations and structures.

### *Conversation Starter*

#### Experiences of unfair treatment

Encourage participants to share any experience of unfair treatment in a work place; in a voluntary organisation; a statutory organisation; or an educational establishment.

#### Method

Share experiences in pairs, listening intently to each other noting feelings (maybe of anger, hurt, frustration, annoyance).

Then return to the whole group, to identify the issues, especially whether there were factors that diminished anyone as a person or a group as people.



### Main Activity

Examine the following scenario about football in the UK

In professional football in the UK some research was carried out to analyse how and why certain kinds of people were appointed coaches and managers. There were approximately 550 positions for football coaches and managers at the time this research was carried out, but only 19 came from Black and Asian minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds. The research showed that many BAME people have the appropriate qualifications and experience for these posts. Also, the percentage of minority ethnic players in some UK teams is very high. When an enquiry took place into how coaches and managers were recruited, it was discovered that those already in positions of coaches and managers said they would recommend people that they personally knew who were likely to be like them.

Reflect on this scenario in pairs:

- what are our immediate reactions?

Afterwards, in small groups discuss the following questions:

- do we have any knowledge or experience of similar scenarios in other contexts?
- How can we change the structures of our institutions, organisations, groups, so that we achieve an ethos of fairer and more just practice?

### Case Studies

#### Case study A

A new member, Sarah has joined the Care Team. During her introduction, she revealed she was Jewish and would like to finish work early on Fridays especially during winter when the sun sets earlier, the Jewish Sabbath beginning on Friday evening and finishes on Saturday evening. In winter months, she would like to get off from work about 3.35 pm as she needs time to get home, wash, change and get to the synagogue. She added that she would of course expect to make up the time on another day. The manager is shocked by this revelation and informs Sarah that she must discuss this request with the senior manager. Later that day the manager speaks with her senior colleague and outlines Sarah's request to finish early on Fridays. The senior manager found the request funny and laughingly observes, 'don't we all want to leave early on Fridays?'

#### QUESTIONS

- Would this work place not have something in their structures that would address such a request, concerning religious belief in a respectful way?
- Does the URC have a policy in place within its structures?

## Case Study B

Kirsty (25) was becoming depressed following a stream of sexist harassment from her male colleagues.

‘I had always dreamed of a high-flying city career so when I graduated, I worked hard to get a job in a well-respected financial institution. I believed I had the skills to do well and was very excited to get started. I was aware it is a very male dominated industry but did not think that would be a problem. I made sure I dressed professionally from the start. The men in my department were hostile towards me from the moment I started. I discovered later that I had taken a role that they thought was going to one of their friends so I think they resented me. To begin with they did not make any sexist remarks but were just generally cold and unhelpful towards me. I naively thought that I just had to prove myself and their attitudes towards me would turn around’.

Unfortunately, things soon went from ‘bad to worse’ for Kirsty. However hard she worked, she couldn’t break through.

‘It started in a subtle way to begin with, with the odd comment here and there. I thought I was just being sensitive and put up with it. However, soon my male colleagues were making me feel very uncomfortable. It was past the point of making a joke of it so I tried to talk to the ring leader and ask why he was being like that. He played innocent and apologised for any misinterpretation, but nothing changed. In fact, I think he just wound up his friends more and the harassment became frequent. Their behaviour was getting to me so much that I dreaded going into work and slipped into a state of depression. I eventually plucked up courage and decided to start going through the process of a complaints procedure which was initially to lodge the complaint to the manager of my department. He came to me after receiving my complaint to say that this kind of thing was not that important but he would do the right thing and pass my complaint higher up in the organisation.’

It is 2 months since Kirsty had this conversation with her manager and she still has not heard anything.

### QUESTIONS

- What are the issues raised in this case study and what are your comments about the behaviours of the people in the immediate work place and the managers?
- What is the purpose of structures in organisations and in what ways did this organisation fail Kirsty?

*Witness Script*

[Biblical text: Epistle of James, chapter 2]

In this chapter, James gives us some very cutting challenges about discrimination and makes it very clear that our behaviour as a church and as individual Christians, has to reflect what we preach, teach and demonstrate about faith in Jesus.

For example, James writes:

“My brothers and sisters, do you, with your acts of favouritism, really believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ?” (Chapter 2:1)

“Have you not made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?” (Chapter 2:4)

“You do well, if you really fulfil the royal law, according to the Scripture, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself’, but if you show partiality, you commit sin and are convicted by the law, as transgressors “. (Chapter 2:8)

James is calling on the churches to find their solidarity with the poor and those discriminated against. He condemns artificial concerns that mask practical indifference. The statements referred to by James in the words ‘made distinctions among yourselves’; ‘your acts of favouritism’ and ‘you show partiality’, make very uncomfortable reading for us in Church today.

- The question for us is: how do we begin to dismantle such behaviour, whether it concerns disability, gender, sexuality, class, ethnicity in the structures of the church?

For as James warns: “faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead” (2:15)

*Further Exploration*

Often structures have been put in place years before. They may have been appropriate then and were probably constructed by a set of people (often by white able bodied males of a particular social background). When ‘make-up’ has changed and other people are keen to participate and contribute, it is often difficult for them to do so, if they do not readily fit into the already set structures and ethos.

At the same time those who are part of the existing structure often fail to realise that it is not an even playing field for many new people who are trying to access the system. Such people are expected to adapt and fit in easily into what has been though the space around the table has changed.

Maybe what is needed is a recognition that as well as expecting the potential new people to adapt, all of us need to be ‘mutually inconvenienced’ in order for change to happen. Belonging needs to be re-negotiated for all.

## QUESTION

Is it necessary to bring about change in our structures and if so, how do we enable this to happen?

*Prayer/Meditation*

### Good Order and Freedom

Creator God,  
 You have made a universe  
 Of order and dependability.  
 Laws and rules balance out  
 Competing needs and  
 Are the foundation on which  
 Humanity is free to build.

So let our laws and rules  
 Be faithful servants,  
 But never our prison  
 Or our god.

May we always apply our laws and rules  
 Never as ends within themselves,  
 But, with minds open to your Spirit's call,  
 Always as your means to  
 Freedom, joy and life  
 In all its fullness



[Ian Fosten in 'Ordinary Time', *URC Prayer Handbook* 2013. © URC, used with permission]

## Conversation 6      Policies and Practices

### *Introduction*

Most people will read the title and find themselves groaning. Another pile of work to do, another range of things that we must look at and change, when our congregations are getting smaller, budgets are cut, staff are asked to do more and more and there are less of us to do the work?

Policies can seem to be as dry as dust. Often the ones held in our offices and churches are covered in dust, simply because they were written as a 'must do', then with a sigh of relief put up on a shelf with a tick in the completed box.

But policies must be living working documents which inform the way in which the organisation (church in our case) works to ensure that all of God's people are valued, welcomed and kept safe. Are we aware of the different policies and procedures of the United Reformed Church and how they are implemented? Do we know where to find the information, for example about child protection?

This session aims to enable participants to identify where they are now in relation to the URC policies and practices and where they would like to be. It also enables some exploration of the difference between law/policies and justice/practice, and the problem in the implementation of policies if hearts are not changed.

From the URC Accessibility Resource document, we quote;

*One of the striking characteristics of the Gospel narratives is Jesus' concern for people with disabilities, but sadly the Church has, in the past, given little attention to their needs...Our responsibility as a Christian community, reinforced by our legal obligations under the Disability Discrimination Act, should make us determined that all members of the community can attend and participate in services easily and with dignity.*

This must apply to all the aspects of the Church's work including planning, building, maintenance, staffing, policy making, communications and worship

### *Conversation Starter*

#### Ice Breaker

Sit in pairs opposite each other – one person starts speaking on their opinion about the relationship between policies and practices - the other person listens and must not interrupt in any way (2 minutes).

Then the other person does the same (2 minutes).

Everyone returns to the whole group and each person recounts what their partner has said.

The purpose is to get into the subject of the session and also to concentrate on how well we listen to others and hear what they are saying.

### Main Activity

Let us look at two of our overarching policies: Equalities and Safeguarding.

The Equalities Policy online:

[http://www.urch.org.uk/images/Equalities/2014\\_Equalities\\_Policy\\_2008.pdf](http://www.urch.org.uk/images/Equalities/2014_Equalities_Policy_2008.pdf)

The Safeguarding Handbook online:

<http://www.urch.org.uk/images/safeguarding/GP4-Safeguarding-Pack-2015w.pdf>

The URC has produced policy documents for both that cover both the organisational and administrative side of the church and the worshipping congregations; we do not need to reinvent the wheel.

With this in mind, think about YOUR ROLE within the structure of the church.

Firstly, with Equalities:

- read the equalities policy statement below and consider the three questions that follow.
- Write the responses on flip chart.

*The United Reformed Church affirms its commitment to show the same openness to all people in today's world. It intends in spirit and in deed to promote equality of opportunity and diversity in all spheres of its activity and is committed to behaving as an equal opportunity organisation. It acknowledges that people are called to be diverse and lively, inclusive and flexible through the sharing of the gospel.*

**1. List the characteristics of your main place of work that could impact on accessibility**

Some suggested responses might be: those with reduced mobility, impaired hearing or sight, those with anxiety issues (too big, too small, too busy). Do not think solely of physical disadvantages but consider if your work is from a variety of locations how do people access this? If public transport is needed to attend meetings how this might affect those on a restricted budget or with mobility issues? Do they need to have access to a computer and/or a printer?

**2. Think about the nature of work, how is this communicated and what adjustments might need to be made to meet 'reasonable adjustment'?**

Consider, for example: What has been done for people who need larger print, those with dyslexia or those with learning difficulties? Have those who are hard of hearing been considered? What about those who struggle with modern technology; are they made to feel awkward or isolated? Is the building wheelchair accessible? Has the role been assessed to see if it could positively be offered to someone with a physical or mental challenge? Coloured paper for documents, larger print, computers with programmes such as 'Dragon.'

3. *Think about how you recruit people to the roles as they become vacant, how is this advertised?*

Consider, for example: What criteria are applied and how could this impact on those who would apply? Has the role description been reviewed prior to advertising to see if there is any learning from previous post holders that may change the job specification? How do you ensure that gender, racial and lay/ordained balance is achieved? Does the role require an applicant to be a member of the United Reformed Church or have professed any faith? Was the role advertised nationally or were personal approaches made? Is it legal to include the phrase “We welcome applicants from minority backgrounds”? You can if you can demonstrate that this is done to ensure that you are targeting underrepresented ethnicities or groups.

**Further questions**

- What was the effect on those who may have been disadvantaged?
- What was the effect on the church in its search to ensure that the gifts and ministries of all are recognised?
- What might be the impact on the reputation and public image of the URC?
- How would having an equalities policy have helped in these situations and from your discussions what would you include in a policy?

We are required by law to make reasonable adjustment to allow someone who might otherwise be disadvantaged to be able to take a full and active part in the work of the Church.

- How does the practice of the workplace match the stated desire of the United Reformed Church?

Read again the statement of intent. Has anything changed following your discussions?

- Where does the church need to exceed the legal requirement, think about the living wage and how the church has led the current thinking. What changes will you make?

*Case Studies and Discussion*

- You are recruiting a secretary for the committee. The role involves travelling to meetings, attending conferences as well as working at church house. One of the applicants has an excellent work record and is well qualified, but suffers from Tourette’s Syndrome which can sometimes mean loud noises and jerking movements also occasionally swear words.

- What would your concerns be when considering employment?
- How would you handle the day to day management of the candidate?
- What reasonable adjustment would be needed to enable the person to be employed?
- If you chose not to employ, how does this meet with the law and the church’s stated policy?

- Safeguarding children and adults at risk: The Church states in the *Good Practice 4* document 'The Church aspires to be a loving community, offering a welcoming environment in which people can flourish safe from harm.'

Consider the following points:

- Think about your committee/ office / church, who is responsible for maintaining the safeguarding practices in your sphere of service?
- Note: although there may be one person who is the link and reporting officer, everyone is responsible for maintaining safeguarding practices.
- What are the safeguarding issues that may affect your sphere of influence?

Write responses on whiteboard or flipchart so that all can contribute. Discuss the issues raised, what action does the organisation need to take to ensure that all risks are assessed and addressed?

- Your committee goes away on a residential meeting. After the meeting, you receive a complaint from one of the male members of the committee who says that one of the female participants had made inappropriate comments to him, and then later came to his room. She was not admitted and the man stated that he felt that her behaviour was not proper. She became embarrassed and hostile and left. The next day he felt that every time he made some comment or suggestion she took the opposite view and was obstructive and combative.

Questions:

- How would you investigate this and what action should be taken?
- Who would you report to?
- What action would need to be taken?

*Witness Script*

[Biblical text: Mark 1: 40-45 - Jesus meets the man with a skin disease on the road]

There is a danger in assuming, that because we have all sorts of legislation and policies to end discrimination, that the economic playing field is a level one: that there is an equality of opportunities for all. The economic system continues to favour particular groups of people.

Questions:

- How aware are we that for BAME people and other groups, inequalities persist in most of our economic policies and practices today?
- Who are the poorest in our society?
- Which group of people are most vulnerable to unemployment and lack of housing



*Further Exploration - Questions*

- Reflect on the experiences of minority people. What sparks for us? Discuss the challenges.
- How would we act out the belief in the inherent worth and dignity of each and every person created in God's image where justice issues are concerned?
- A common idea suggests that the poor commit the greatest number of crimes. Is this true?
- Do we think there is any indication that racism, classism and post codes play a role in the way we stop and search and define and prosecute crime?

*Prayer/Meditation*

God-who-saves-and-blesses-abundantly  
open us up to your Spirit dwelling within us  
so that we may live fully.  
Inspire our prioritising  
in the choices we make each day.  
Lead us away from wanting to get our own back.  
Show us how to build bridges  
rather than constructing walls,  
as you inspire us to break  
the cycle of all that is negative,  
violent or evil.  
May we be overcome by  
your generous heartbeat  
of overflowing goodness! Amen [Michael Jagessar]



## Conversation 7      Intersections - Overlapping Issues: Where now and What next?

### *Introduction*

We all live multiple, layered identities derived from our social relations, history and the operation of structures of power. We are members of more than one community at the same time and we can simultaneously experience marginalisation and privilege.

Discrimination involves a value judgment and often we tend to restrict forms of exclusion to easily identifiable individual acts. Thus, we can miss the institutional or systemic causes, often a result of 'collective' decisions and policies. We must identify and understand that these can be subtle and less identifiable.

For transformation to take place, we must identify and understand the intersections of marginalisation and all justice related issues. For instance: how does racism and gender discrimination intersect with issues like poverty, voting rights, prison population or environmental justice?

Intersectionality is a helpful tool in identifying / addressing multiple experiences of different sets of identities impact on access to rights and opportunities. The intention is to reveal meaningful distinctions and similarities, in order to overcome discrimination and put necessary conditions in place in order that all share in full, flourishing and abundant lives.

Exploring how issues of exclusion intertwine is a useful means to help us link the various forms of exclusion to systemic causes: the social, economic, political, cultural and legal environment that contributes to discrimination and structures experiences of oppression and privilege.

### *Conversation starter*

Imagine you are a single black and minority ethnic poor woman, with basic language proficiency, originally from Somalia. You are trying to get housing for yourself. You have access to housing benefit, £377 a month which enables you to have one room in a shared house, but the cost per month of one room is around £500. For 3 months you have tried to find a room to rent but have experienced rebuff and discrimination from landlords. Most landlords say they do not take housing benefit tenants and one said he did not rent his property to African people.

How would you feel? What might be your next step? What are the forms of exclusion at work here?

### *Main Activity*

#### A current story

This is a current story of the work of a Christian community worker who is seeking to provide opportunities through a Project comprising several mini-projects, in a town which is multi-cultural, multi-faith which also includes people who experience multi-deprivation. It is a place where different kinds of deprivation and disadvantage overlap and at the same

time where there is opportunity for discovery and sharing of countless talents and gifts. The mini-projects that make up this larger Project are:

- a. A same difference Project which fosters new relationships between people of different cultures and faiths, marking common themes in people's lives such as birth, childhood, marriage, death, discovering what makes us the same and yet different; sharing photos, memories, stories and food.
- b. A sports project, focussing on archery, meeting in a church hall with awards for achievements. This is an all age activity, the youngest being 5 and the oldest 70 years.
- c. A project with Roma people, working with the different generations, building effective trust and communication.
- d. A project building intentional partnerships with different community leaders and with different community organisations.
- e. A project bringing together people of very different social backgrounds and faith backgrounds to form a writers' group which is an open group. This initiative is building confidence and developing creativity and writing skills. They are writing poems, stories, Psalms and prayers.

The inter-linking of local churches with these different projects is significant, in the way this has grown in the last few years.

Comments from the Community Worker:

- The projects are sometimes subject to unpredictability caused by sudden changes
- Occasionally new shoots come out of nowhere which is exciting
- There are occasions when you can put a lot of work into an initiative that does not bear any fruit
- Established pieces of work sometimes die un-expectantly while other projects bear fruit beyond expectation
- In all of this, there are people experiencing disadvantage who are interacting with each other, turning negatives into positives and becoming more empowered to do something about their situations.

QUESTIONS:

- In this story can we identify difficulties that could occur with people coming together across diversities and exclusions of different kinds and if so how might they be addressed?
- What do you think are the benefits and opportunities for disadvantaged and advantaged people in such a Project?
- In what ways can participants in these projects be made aware of the intersecting of issues around exclusion? What may happen?

### *Witness Script*

[Biblical Text: Matthew 26:6-13; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13;24-26]

The context of this story in Matthew is one of Jesus being in the house of this Simon who was shunned by others because he had skin disease. A woman came into the house with a glass filled with aromatic oil. Here we picture Jesus lying on the couch having something to eat. The woman poured this oil on Jesus's head. What was the reaction of the onlookers? Well, they, including Jesus's companions, were disgusted when they saw what she was doing. They said: What a waste! A lot of charities would be pleased to have the money from the sale of the oil! Jesus of course sensed their disapproval and said, 'Don't be so hard on the woman! She has done something wonderful for me. Your selfishness ensures a steady supply of people for you to practice your charity on. I will not always be here to receive your gifts. This woman has embalmed me, ready for my burial. Take special note of what I say. Whenever and wherever the Good News is spoken about, you must ensure that this woman's action plays a big part in the story'. Why were the people watching this action, disapproving and shocked? Was it because she was a woman making this public spectacle and perhaps because of her low social standing? Despite such disadvantages she brought a beautiful gift to Jesus. How was this being understood?

Let us look at Paul's comments in the First letter to the Corinthians. He is likening the Christian believers to the human body. Look at the way the human body works. There are many parts, but they fit together to make one body. Those of us who belong to Jesus, whatever our ethnicity, or place in society, the same spirit of God has entered each of us, just like having the same drink from the same cup. Paul's advice is to suggest we think of ourselves as together making up the body of Jesus. Each of us is a vital part in that body. In the Christian community, God wants everyone to count; leaders, speakers, teachers, artists, healers, administrators, enablers, communicators, carers etc. No one can do these tasks at the same time! It's a good thing to aim high and develop our talents. We should encourage and appreciate the talent others give and bring, even the unexpected one such as the woman who anointed Jesus with that special oil.

[Reflection on I Corinthians 12 draws on *Good as New- a Radical Retelling of the Scriptures*, by John Henson (2004: 344) ]

### *Where now and what next?*

Reflecting on disadvantage connected to discrimination, deprivation and poverty, these are sometimes hidden from others or at other times, they are evident for all to see. In our context, there is a danger of assuming, that because we have all sorts of legislation to end discrimination, for example, that the economic playing field is a level one; that there is an equality of opportunity for all. The reality is: much of our 'systems' continue to favour particular groups of people.

There is no hierarchy in marginalisation or exclusion. The causes/reasons overlap. Experiences of marginalised groups will not be the same. The pattern will most likely be similar. So it is important that we understand the impact of converging identities for access and opportunities: especially how policies, programmes services and decisions that impact on one aspect of our life together are linked to others. Such an awareness can be the start towards constructive redressing of the causes rather than plastering symptoms.

### *Reflecting together*

#### Method

- a. think on your own and make notes
- b. link up with one or two others in the training group and share ideas
- c. In the whole group make notes of any action you have identified and may think important to take further

### *Strategies for Change*

Part of devising strategies for change or interrupting any cycle of exclusion must be an openness to change ourselves and to participate in processes that bring about change.

In relation to diversity and equality issues consider the following questions under the categories of A B and C (below)

- What do you feel your church/congregation/denomination is doing well?
- What do you sense is not being done well?
- What do you feel should be done in order to become more effective?
- What are the steps you (leadership or personal role) might take to achieve the above?
- How are A, B & C related?

A. *Personal Level*

B. *Corporate or Collective Responsibility in church/workplace/organisation*

C. *Global compassion and action*

*Prayer/Meditation***Risking All**

Jesus, you risked it all.

A man in a man's world

A Jew in a Jewish world

You could have toed the line

Blended in,

But instead you risked it all.

You risked all

-

For the vulnerable and the dispossessed

For the disowned and the unrespectable

For those who were broken by a scornful world,

For the untouchable ones who needed your touch,

And the heavy-laden who needed release

For all of these, you risked it all

For all of these, you gave your all.

Lord, we still live in a man's world;

Where gender, colour, culture, age or religion

Determine who has power;

Where some are scorned and made to feel they don't belong

And we could opt for an easy life-

Simply going with the flow.

So give us courage to risk it all for your sake

Speaking out against injustice

Foregoing privilege to lift those for whom life is a struggle,

Giving up power to those who are powerless

Risking our very selves to follow the cross

On which you gave your all

[Karen Campbell in *Ordinary Time*, URC Prayer Handbook 2013 © URC, used with permission]



## Selection of Sources and References

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### *Photos-Images*

All the photos and images in this collection were taken by Michael Jagessar on various occasions and visits to URC Partner Churches and in his visits across the United Reformed Church in the UK. Butterfly design and art work on page 4 created by the Revd Simon Walkling

## Appendices (to accompany Conversations)

### Conversation 2 Diversity and Difference

#### GUIDELINES FOR PRESENTATIONS THAT TAKE PLACE IN URC GATHERINGS

(For example: General Assemblies; Youth Assemblies; United Reformed Church Committees; Synod Meetings etc.)

*These guidelines originated from a meeting of Thames North Racial Justice Advocates of 12th March 2008. It has been endorsed by Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry of the United Reformed Church. Many of us have been following these guidelines, which while they point to presentations that take place at gatherings of the United Reformed Church, also apply to any of the communication media we use or endorse. The thoughts here are not exhaustive as we can add to them! **These guidelines can be broadened to apply to all the groups of marginalised people.***

- The URC has declared itself to be a multicultural church in which we celebrate a rich cultural diversity and we praise God for that.
- Whichever local church we belong to, we believe that we are part of the whole body of the United Reformed Church and any representation we make of ourselves and our ministries and mission, should reflect the body as a whole.

We call upon all who are responsible for planning and implementing presentations for all kinds of URC gatherings, all who prepare publicity and resource materials, and all those endorsing web-pages and materials external to the United Reformed Church to consider the following questions, in the light of the above statements.

We believe that to consider these questions thoughtfully and proactively, **can enhance a sense of belonging and inclusiveness for more people**, while failure to do so can cause offense for some and could result in people feeling marginalised and excluded.

- Have we considered the composition of the group/team of people making a live presentation?
- How can we better encourage wider participation?
- Have we considered the nature and content of any power point/DVD/video presentation?
- Have we thought about the language, visual images, photographs and symbols that we use in our presentations and communication?
- How can our presentation best reflect the multicultural, diverse and inter-cultural nature of our church?



### Conversation 3 Locating the 3 P's (privilege, power and prejudices)

#### Examining Definitions

PREJUDICE IS:

- a) An opinion which is not supported by experience or factual information, but based on stereotypes.
- b) Prejudging people on how they look and not on what they do.
- c) Negative judgements applied to a group of people whatever they do or say.
- d) None of the above.

DISCRIMINATION IS:

- a) The way some groups, work places, clubs, etc. set up systems which keep out certain sorts of people.
- b) Doing nothing about racism.
- c) Action — or lack of action — which allows to continue the oppression of certain groups of people.
- d) None of the above.

RACISM IS:

- a) The belief that human beings can be grouped on the basis of inherited looks, and the belief that one's own group is superior to all other groups, defined by skin colour, (usually held by people of North European descent).
- b) Prejudice plus the power to enforce it — forming an ideology of superiority.
- c) The attitudes and practices which make people exclude others from opportunities, resources, and services — solely on the basis of their inherited looks.
- d) None of the above.

ANTI-RACISM IS:

- a) Behaviour which treats everyone in the same way.
- b) Attitudes and practices which assert the human rights of people who suffer racism; and setting up policies which challenge racism.
- c) Taking responsibility for recognising racism and for openly involving those oppressed through alliances with them.
- d) None of the above.

## Examples of Privilege at work

It is important to understand and recognize your privilege in order to better ally yourself with a marginalised community and to help create a future where the institutions that perpetuate such privilege and oppression no longer have an influence. Use your position of power to amplify the voices of those who might not otherwise be heard.

### *In Sports Privilege*

"I let my fans down, I let the sport down that I have been playing since the age of four and I love so deeply. I know with this I face consequences and I don't want to end my career this way and I really hope I will be given another chance to play this game." With these words, five-time Grand Slam winner Maria Sharapova announced to the world that she had tested positive for using the banned drug meldonium during the 2016 Australian Open.

You may not think that privilege is at work in this case Sharapova. But the consider the following in the context of how the press responds to both Sharapova and Serena Williams.

When Sharapova admitted to testing positive, she was given what BAME people would have been deprived of for most of the lives: "The Benefit of Doubt." Martina Navratilova, the tennis legend wrote on Twitter, "*Hold your horses everyone- about Maria- I don't have all the facts, I hope it's an honest mistake, stuff was legal as far as I know till 2015,*" which was very different to what she said when she refused to believe Serena's explanation of viral infection at Wimbledon saying, "*I think virus, whatever they're saying it was, I don't think that was it. I think it's clear that's not the case.*"

The Daily Mail, which has been on a never-ending crusade against Serena Williams, was more sympathetic to Sharapova writing, "*Maria Sharapova admits to failing drugs test: Here's how social media reacted to her sensational and **honest revelation*** (emphasis added)." Annabel Croft, the former British tennis player downplayed the significance of Sharapova's revelation saying, "*I was thinking 'wow' how is this going to affect her business plan for the future, it does put a **slight tarnish** on it* (emphasis added)" Former American tennis player James Blake described Sharapova as classy on Twitter writing, "*Classy of @MariaSharapova to hold a press conference for this and admit making a mistake.*" Ryan Harrison, a tennis player wrote, "*Maria handled that so well. In my opinion, honest mistake from a great champion.*"

One should wonder why Sharapova, a "white villain" is being given a benefit of doubt when such benefits are never given to "black villains." Where was the benefit of doubt when Tiger Woods was caught out for cheating on his wife? Where was the benefit of doubt when Ben Johnson, Asafa Powell, and other Black athletes were caught out for doping? What's happening here? Amazingly, white privilege turns the worse offence that can be committed in sports, into

an honest mistake and a 'slight tarnish'. How come and why can such privilege turn the guilty into innocent paragons of virtue?

[This Case Study has been developed and adapted from an online article “#SharapovaGate: A Case Study On White Privilege” by Ahmed Olayinka Sule, CFA (March 10, 2016)

<https://www.proshareng.com/news/People/-SharapovaGate--A-Case-Study-On-White-Privilege/30267>]

*Are you thin privileged?*

Mass media bombards us with messages that the “normal” size is actually slim or thin. The message is simple: we need to be slim or thin in order to be okay and normal gets played out frequently for people who are bigger or oversize than ‘normal’.

‘Sizeism’ is one of the most accepted ‘isms’ around! Here are some examples of what is termed thin privilege, regularly experienced by those who are seen by society as being physically “too big” You may wish to add others.

If you are thin or slim

**You’re not assumed to be unhealthy just because of your size:** (unless you’re being thin-shamed – the opposite of fat-shamed).

- When you’re at the supermarket, people don’t comment on the food selection in your trolley
- Your health insurance rates are not higher than everyone else’s.
- You can expect to pay reasonable prices for your clothing.
- You can expect to find your clothing size sold locally.
- You can expect to find clothing in the latest styles and colours - not bland and shapeless styles meant to hide your body.
- You don’t receive suggestions from your friends and family to join a weight-loss program.
- When you go to the doctor, they don’t suspect ‘weight-related’ issues as the first/most likely diagnosis.

**People do not assume that you are lazy, based solely on your size.**

- You’re not the brunt of jokes for countless numbers of comedians and daft politicians
- Airlines won’t charge you extra to fly.
- You are not perceived as looking sloppy or unprofessional based on your size.
- You can eat what you want and not have others make assumptions about your eating habits.
- People don’t ask your partners what it’s like to have sex with you because of your size.
- You’re more likely to get a raise or promotion at work than someone who is fat.

- Friends don't describe you to others using a qualifier ("He's a bit heavy, but REALLY nice chap").
- The media doesn't describe your body shape as part of a 'massive problem' and putting the NHS under strain
- You can choose not be preoccupied with your size and shape because you have other priorities, and you won't be judged.

### *How about Christian Privilege?*

As a Christian and from one of the 'historic Churches', have you ever thought of the following:

- You can expect to most likely have time off work to celebrate religious holidays.
- Music and television programs pertaining to your religion's holidays are readily accessible.
- It is easy to find stores that carry items that enable you to practice/celebrate your faith
- Holidays celebrating your faith are so widely supported you can often forget they are limited to your faith (e.g. wish someone a "Merry Christmas" or "Happy Easter" without considering their faith).
- You can worship freely, without fear of violence or threats.
- A bumper sticker supporting your religion won't likely lead to your car being vandalized.
- You can practice your religious customs without being questioned, mocked, or inhibited.
- Positive references to your faith are regularly made about your faith practice.
- Politicians responsible for your governance are probably members of your faith.
- It is easy for you to find your faith accurately depicted in the media, movies and books..
- You can reasonably assume that anyone you meet will know something of your beliefs.
- You can go into any career without it being associated with or explained by your faith.
- You can travel to any part of the country and know your religion will be accepted, safe, and you will have access to religious spaces to practice your faith.
- Your faith can be an aspect of your identity without being a defining aspect (e.g., people won't think of you as their "Christian" friend)
- You can be polite, gentle, or peaceful, and not be considered an "exception" to those practicing your faith.
- Fundraising to support congregations of your faith will not be investigated as potentially threatening or terrorist behaviour.
- Construction of spaces of worship will not likely be halted due to your faith.
- You are never asked to speak on behalf of all the members of your faith.
- Without special effort, your children will have many teachers who share your faith.
- Disclosing your faith to an adoption agency will not likely prevent you from being able to adopt children.
- You can complain about your religion being under attack without it being perceived as an attack on another religion.
- You can dismiss the idea that identifying with your faith bears certain privileges.

### *And heterosexual Privilege?*

In spite of increasing acceptance and support for LGBTQIA+ people, we still live in a society that affords heterosexual individuals more rights, power, and freedom. Straight privilege influences everything – from our daily lives to career goals. Consider the following ways that straight privilege comes into play

- **Your orientation is validated from birth:** Heteronormativity is established before kids are even out of diapers. When a boy has a crush on a girl or vice versa, they don't have to question why they like that person or the larger implications of liking that person. Attraction to another gender is already anticipated and expected.
- **You don't Have to Come Out:** You don't have to announce your heterosexuality to the world.
- **You don't have to justify your orientation:** No one is going to insist that heterosexuality is just a phase. You won't be asked to prove your straightness by rattling off your romantic or sexual history or trace it back to a particular moment in your childhood. You won't be told to pick a side. You can move through the world with your orientation and lifestyle unquestioned.
- **Your right to marry is never questioned:** While Straight couples have had the right to get married just about anywhere without question, up until the very recent the right of Gay couples to get married is *still* being continuously attacked.
- **You are not pressured out of your job because of your sexual orientation:** Even in 2016 we hear and read of people been pressured out of their work for being queer
- **You don't have to fear violence because of your orientation:** A queer person risks facing everything from street harassment to hate abuse/violence – and even the threat of being murdered – when they go out in public. Straight couples can hold hands or kiss in public without fear of scrutiny, retaliation, or death.
- **You don't have to worry about losing family, friends, or financial support as a result of revealing your sexuality:** Sometimes, when a queer person decides to come out, they risk disappointing their parents or losing a friend.
- **You have reasonable and fair media representation:** Just about every form of media positively exudes heterosexuality. In seemingly endless incarnations, straight people always manage to get their happy ending, no matter how many obstacles are in their way or how stubborn they are.
- **You can talk your love life without worrying about accidentally outing yourself:** Whether it's hastily changing pronouns in stories or creating fictional significant others or just avoiding the subject of dating at all costs, gay people have to go to meticulous lengths to avoid outing themselves. It can be very stressful for LGBTQIA+ folks to navigate even casual conversation with the constant fear of outing yourself to the wrong person. Straight people have the luxury to divulge as much information as they want about their personal lives without worrying about the reactions of their audience.

### General Examples of Privilege

1. I can avoid spending time with people whom I was trained to mistrust and who have learned to mistrust my kind or me.

2. If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area which I can afford and in which I would want to live.
3. I can go shopping alone most of the time, fairly well assured that I will not be followed, watched or harassed by store security.
4. I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely and positively represented.
5. When I am told about the British or English heritage or about civilization, I am shown that people of my colour/gender made it what it is.
6. I can be fairly sure of having my voice heard in a group in which I am the only member of my ethnic group/gender.
7. I can be casual about whether or not to listen to another person's voice in a group in which she is the only member of her ethnicity.
8. I can go into a bookshop and count on finding the writings of my ethnicity represented, into a supermarket and find the staple foods that fit with my cultural traditions, into a hairdresser's shop and find someone who can deal with my hair.
9. Whether I use cheques, credit cards, or cash, I can count on my skin colour or accent not to work against the appearance that I am financially reliable.
10. I did not have to educate our children to be aware of systemic racism for their own daily physical protection.
11. I can be pretty sure that my children's teachers and employers will tolerate them if they fit school and workplace norms; my chief worries about them do not concern others' attitudes toward their ethnicity.
12. I can swear, or dress in second-hand clothes, or not answer letters, without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty, or the illiteracy of my race.
13. I can do well in a challenging situation without being called a credit to my ethnicity/class/gender.
14. I am never asked to speak for all the people of my ethnic group.
15. I can be reasonably sure that if I ask to talk to "the person in charge," I will be facing a person that looks like me.
16. If I am stopped by the police I can be sure I haven't been singled out because of my ethnicity.
17. I can easily buy posters, postcards, picture books, greeting cards, dolls, toys, and children's magazines featuring people of my ethnicity and culture.
18. I can go home from most meetings of organizations I belong to feeling somewhat tied in, rather than isolated, out of place, outnumbered, unheard, held at a distance, or feared.
19. I can be pretty sure that an argument with a colleague of another ethnicity is more likely to jeopardize her chances for advancement than to jeopardize mine.
20. If I declare there is a racial issue at hand, or there isn't a racial issue at hand, my colour and ethnic origin will lend me more credibility for either position than a minority ethnic would.
21. My culture gives me little fear about ignoring the perspectives and powers of people from other cultures.
22. I am not made acutely aware that my shape, bearing, or body odour will be taken as a reflection on my ethnicity/class.

23. I can take a job with an affirmative action employer without having my co-workers on the job suspect that I got it because of my ethnicity/class/gender.
24. I can be pretty sure of finding people who would be willing to talk with me and advise me about my next steps, professionally.
25. I can think over many options, social, political, imaginative, or professional, without asking whether a person of my ethnicity/class would be accepted or allowed to do what I want to do.
26. I can be late to a meeting without having the lateness reflect on my ethnicity or culture
27. I can choose public accommodation without fearing that people of my ethnicity/culture cannot get in or will be mistreated in the places I have chosen.
28. I can be sure that if I need legal or medical help, my ethnicity/class/gender will not work against me.
29. If I have low credibility as a leader, I can be sure that my ethnicity is not the problem.
30. I can easily find academic courses and institutions that give attention only to people of my ethnicity and culture.
31. I can expect figurative language and imagery in all of the arts to testify to my cultural experiences.
32. I can choose blemish cover or bandages in "flesh" colour and have them more or less match my skin.

### Jagessar & Campbell/February 2013

[Listed adapted from that of Peggy Macintosh (1988) a White Scholar who taught Women Studies. Her article was entitled: "WHITE PRIVILEGE AND MALE PRIVILEGE: A Personal Account of Coming to See Correspondences Through Work in Women's Studies".]



## WORKING DEFINITIONS (selected glossary)

**ANTI-RACISM:** A conscious intentional effort to eradicate racism in all its forms – individual, cultural, and institutional.

**BIAS:** *Bias* is an inclination or preference either for or against an individual or group that interferes with impartial judgment.

**BIGOTRY:** *Bigotry* is an unreasonable or irrational attachment to negative stereotypes and prejudices.

**BLACK:** a construct primarily for political unity based on experiences of discrimination among people whose skin colour is not white. In the UK, this term is used mainly to refer to people of African-Caribbean, Asian and African origin.

**CLASSISM:** is prejudice and/or discrimination against people because of their real or perceived economic status.

**CROSS-RACIAL HOSTILITY:** Hostile attitude and oppressive behaviour exercised by Black and Minority Ethnic People against one another based on “prejudice plus trying to feel powerful.” Black and Minority Ethnic people do not necessarily have the power to determine the quality of life over other groups of people, power that is backed by law and institutions.

**COLONIAL:** Belonging to the period of expansion of European (including British) rule in the “new world” (the Americas) after 1492 and in large parts of Africa and Asia from the 18th century and into the 19th century especially. Colonialism is characterized by “power over” of rulers over the ruled, not only politically and economically, but also socially and religio-culturally.

**CULTURAL RACISM:** When a dominant ethnic or cultural group use power to perpetuate their cultural heritage and impose it upon others, while at the same time destroying the culture of ethnic minorities.

**DISCRIMINATION:** the denial of justice and fair treatment by both individuals and institutions in many areas, including employment, education, housing, banking, and political rights. Discrimination is an action that can follow prejudiced thinking.

**DIVERSITY:** means different or varied. The population of the UK is made up of people from diverse races, cultures and places.

**DOMINANT CULTURE:** used widely and rather unanimously to refer to the cultural group with the greatest political power in a given context.

**ETHNICITY:** concerns the heritage, character, experience of people distinguished by political and geographic boundaries whether chosen or received. Refers to: the “memory, response, mood coded into the soul, transmitted through generations.” As such, ethnicity functions as a “public metaphor” for “a knowledge related to heritage, character, social experience of people” and can be distinguished from culture (which has to do explicitly with shared patterns of living) and race (which is often considered a matter of genetics).

**ETHNIC:** refers to a people who share a sense of group identity because of a common racial, national, tribal, religious, linguistic or cultural characteristics. An ethnic group is a self-conscious gathering of people, united or closely related by shared experience and particular identity (as noted above). The term **ethnic minority** or **minority ethnic** refers to such a group of people who are numerically a minority within a majority dominant group in a society.



**ETHNOCENTRICITY:** considered by some to be an attitude that views one's own culture as superior. Others cast it as "seeing things from the point of view of one's own ethnic group" without the necessary connotation of superiority.

**EXPANSIVE LANGUAGE:** Expansive language refers to the use as many names and biblical metaphors for God as possible as we stretch our imagination towards God that we may yet discover novelty, challenge and joyful surprise in our encounter with the Divine. Limiting our language for political, pastoral or personal reasons we run the risk of domesticating God or even making God in our own image. The abundance and diversity of images of God in the Bible bears witness to the futility of focusing on any sole imagery as sufficient to describe God.

**GENDER:** having to do with whether someone or something is masculine, feminine, or neuter (originally a grammatical term pertaining to article and verb conjugation). Issues of gender have become prominent in multicultural education since females can be understood as a minority culture, and since feminist theory has come to inform many multicultural theorists.

**GENDER BIAS:** most often used in reference to the hidden (or unrecognized) male perspective, or bias, in a given theory or practice. The unrecognized male perspective has often been considered "generally human," which automatically favours masculine ways of thinking and acting. The first step toward dealing with this bias is to recognize it.

**HETEROSEXISM:** is a powerful cultural assumption that everyone is heterosexual or should be, that heterosexuality is the only normal, right, and moral way to be, and that anything else, therefore, is abnormal, unnatural, and wrong.

**HOMOPHOBIA:** is the irrational fear and intolerance of people who are believed to be lesbian, gay or bisexual.

**HUMAN DIVERSITY:** Meanings as diverse and complex as the breadth of diversity. To some diversity is synonymous with multiculturalism, meaning addressing the experiences of ethnic and some linguistic minority groups. For others the focus will be on categories of stratification (eg. sexual orientation) or treat all 'groups' as cultures (eg. the cultures of physical disability) downplaying the social hierarchy typically associated with human diversity. To others human diversity means the whole range of human experience. It is this latter we wish to work with – a broad and contextually grounded (UK) - as it offers vistas in: addressing the experiences of any group (Black, ethnic, women, gays, disabled etc); examining the behaviour of dominant groups as an important but special case rather than as universal and standard human behaviour; bringing issues of group status and power to the forefront.

**INCLUSIVE:** having a posture (attitude or policy) of inclusion of diverse others.

**INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE:** refers to non-sexist language, or language that "includes" all persons in its references. It is widely believed and documented that the male-biased sexism of "traditional" modern English creates and reinforces discrimination against women and that inclusive language can help to rectify this. For some persons, inclusive language means the use of male/female gender-neutral language and imagery. For others, it means avoiding the use of pejorative or hierarchical language in reference to gender, physical conditions, marriage status, race, age, and other culturally differentiated relationships among people. These same distinctions may be found among those advocating for an inclusive language in reference to divinity.

**INSTITUTIONAL RACISM** consists of "the collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be 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. Operates at 5 levels: attitudes and actions of personnel; policies; practices; structures; foundations.

- **Direct** = conscious, intentional and openly practiced without apology
- **Indirect** = intentional and unintentional. **Intentional** = deliberately disguised and hidden from public awareness; **Unintentional** = more complex and exists with a life of its own. Extremely difficult to eradicate

**INTERNALIZED RACISM:** This is a distress pattern in which victims of racism (knowingly or unknowingly) accept the negative stereotypes about them that are perpetuated by the dominant group.

**MINORITY:** a group or subgroup, or a member of such, which has limited access to positions of power and therefore little influence upon the larger group, institution, or society. The term is considered by some to have derogatory connotations, and some writers seek to avoid the term altogether by using positive designations such as Black or Asian.

**MULTICULTURAL:** Consisting of a diverse group of cultures.

- **multiculturalism** as the practice of recognizing and celebrating cultural diversity.
- **intercultural** underscores more than the presence of a multiplicity of cultures as our given reality. It envisions and describes the engagement given this presence, pointing to a deeper, active and critical interaction and mutually reciprocal relationships among and between diverse groups. Such a process will mean a movement beyond mere dialogical or parallel relationships, where all are mutually inconvenienced, towards transformation in our life together as members of the body of Christ and the United Reformed Church.

**NON-BINARY:** Non-binary” is an umbrella term designating a vast array of diverse gender identities other than the typical Western ideas of “man” or “woman”. For some people, “non-binary” is itself an identity label. There are very many non-binary identities, and these identities are culturally specific. Context and culture matter. For many people, the Western gender binary is a site of colonial violence. It may or may not be culturally appropriate to call someone a “non-binary” person. It's important that you respect how people describe and understand themselves and their identities— in terms that are meaningful to them and that make sense to them

**POLITICAL CORRECTNESS:** refers for some to efforts to “use the right words” and insist that others do so without giving clear attention to the philosophical, theological, sociological, or ethical issues which make the language or actions desirable or undesirable. Others use the term to refer to perceived attempts to exclude or make taboo any challenges to a certain (liberal) political agenda.

**POWER:** The capacity to have control, authority or influence over others. In the context of cultural competence and white racism awareness, social power refers to the capacity of the dominant (white) culture to have control, authority and influence over people of colour. Social power + prejudice = oppression.

- Power is used to enforce one’s prejudice to keep others from enjoying gains and rewards in the society simply because of prejudice against them.

**PREJUDICE:** Manifested in acquired beliefs and opinions that lead an individual or group of individuals to be biased for or against members of a particular group. It is usually related to making negative pre-judgments about others (not based on actual facts).

**PRIVILEGE:** Unearned power giving certain groups economic, social, and political advantages simply by virtue of their belonging to those dominant groups in any society (e.g. male rather than female, able-bodied rather than dis-abled, higher rather than lower social-economic class, and so on); often enjoyed unconsciously.

**RACE:** An anthropological and social (rather than a biological) construction based on differences in skin colour and facial features imposed by Europeans in order to justify colonization. Race is in fact a modern concept and the attendant radicalisation of societies is a phenomenon that is at most just over 400 years old. It should be noted that it was through Christian religious institutions, not universities that popular notions of race were disseminated.

**RACISM:** The systematic oppression of one group of people by another on the basis of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. In general terms it consists of conduct, words and practices which advantage one group at the disadvantage of other groups. Racism operates on personal, interpersonal, cultural and institutional levels.

- Racism is a combination of prejudice and power. You can be prejudiced and have no power

**SEXISM:** is prejudice and/or discrimination based on gender.

**SEXUAL ORIENTATION:** denotes the deep-seated direction of one's romantic and erotic attraction toward the same sex (homosexual), other sex (heterosexual), or both sexes (bisexual). Sexual orientation is a continuum, not a set of absolutely distinct categories. People do not choose their sexual orientation; they discover their feelings of attraction. The only choice is whether or not to act on those feelings. Some people's feelings vary over time.

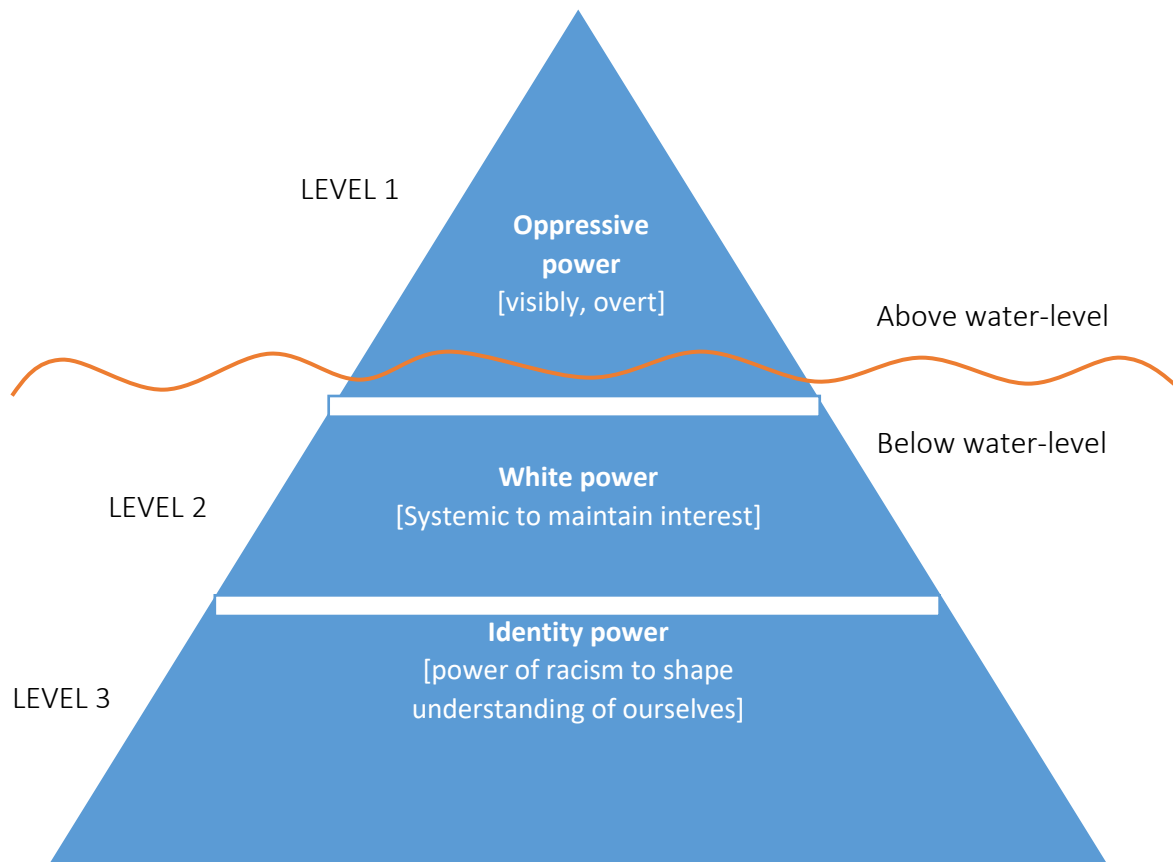
**SCAPEGOATING:** is the action of blaming an individual or group for something when, in reality, there is no one person or group responsible for the problem. It targets another person or group as responsible for problems in society because of that person's group identity.

**WHITE:** a political construct to describe the racial identity of the dominant population and original inhabitants of the UK.

**WHITENESS:** comprises of 3 dimensions: a position of structural advantage, associated with 'privileges' of the most basic kind; a 'standpoint' or place from which to look at oneself, others and society; a set of ways of being in the world, a set of cultural practices, often not named as 'white' by white folks, but looked on instead as 'British' or 'normal'.

**WHITE PRIVILEGE:** an invisible package of unearned assets that a White person can count on cashing in every day. These unearned, unjustified advantages are not automatically afforded to ethnic minority groups in this country and are generally taken for granted by those who are classified as "white."

The anti-racism iceberg (can be adapted to anti-oppressive iceberg)



**Level one (above the water):** This is an understanding of racism (as one example) derived from historical and current occurrences of visible racial hate crimes, profiling and overtly discriminatory acts and behaviours. If we consider these are acts of bigots and invest all our energies only at addressing this level, we are merely dealing with the ‘tip of the iceberg’.

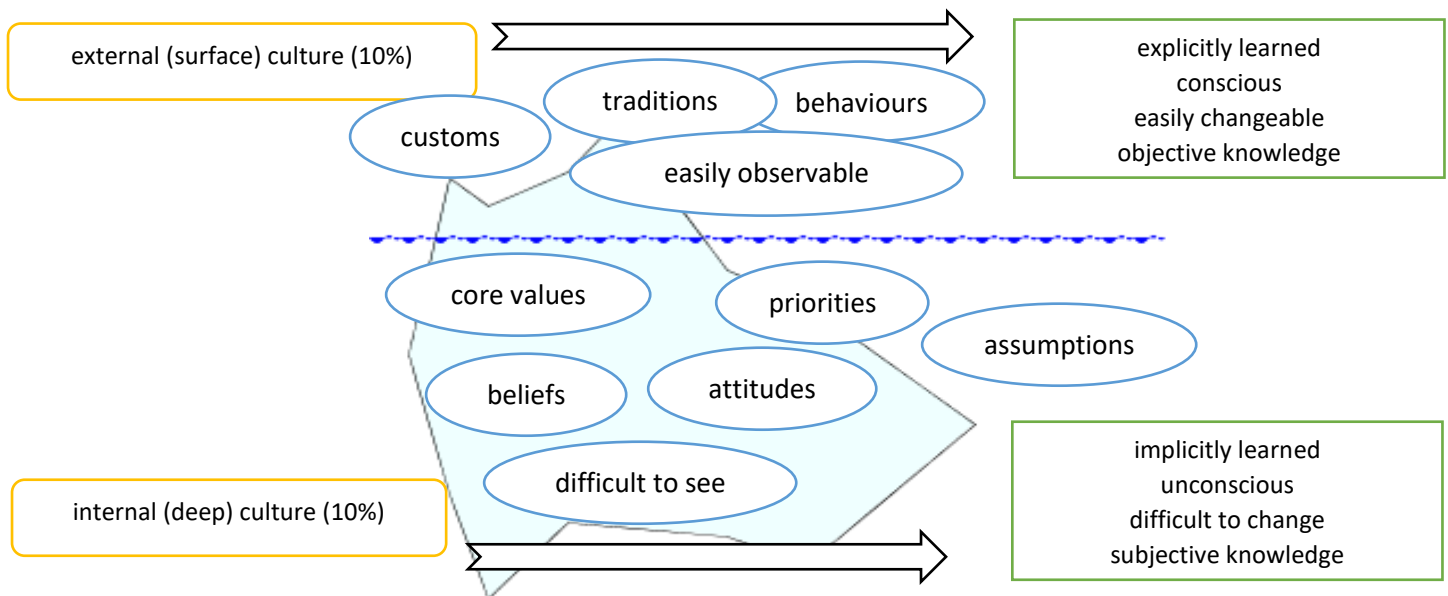
**Level two (below the water):** This level points to racism’s ability to provide and maintain power and privilege for a group of people (in this case White supremacy) and their systems. This is at the heart of and underlines the entrenchment of racism (in institutions and systems).

**Level three (the deeper and more dangerous aspect):** This level is all our interacting from birth with the institutions that shape our understanding of ourselves. Consciously or unconsciously an identity of superiority is built and maintained. This identity insists that our ways are the best and brings civilisation to the world. We are the model and everyone else must behave like us. All else is inferior. We can see how this level will insist on conforming, and assimilating.

Consider: how can this diagram help you rethink and change the way you respond to racism?

## Conversation 4 The Cultural Iceberg Exercise

[This idea is adapted from Guy Rocher (1969). In an Iceberg only about 10% is visible above the water-level (see blue line below). The majority of the iceberg is hidden beneath the surface. Along this line, some experts suggest that culture has two components with only 10% of culture (that is, external or surface culture) is easily visible. The larger part (90%) of what can be termed internal or deep culture is not visible. This is hidden below the surface.



### The visible

This is what we first think of when we consider 'culture'. It will be the 'doing': food – dress – dance – literature – music – games etc. It will include what is visibly observable: ways of life, laws and customs, institutions, methods, rituals and language

### The invisible

This is what largely makes up culture. For instance: *thinking* (norms – roles – ideologies – beliefs – philosophy); *feeling* (values – tastes – attitudes – desires – assumptions – expectations – myths)

Much of what is below the water-level may not be even 'conscious' to those of that culture. And much of what appears to be above and visible may not be what it seems and may have all sorts of connections below the surface.

### Cultural Awareness Activity: 'I know a culture'

Circle the word that is your first response to the description. This is not a test, and no one will know your individual response. Answer as quickly as possible. (Circle only one response.)

#### I know a culture where...

"They have a ritual involving the use of certain garments, only worn in certain seasons. The robing and disrobing of this garment and the timing of this, has great cultural significance in the hospitality ritual."	
Bizarre	Delightful
Interesting	Disturbing
Exotic	Normal
Disgusting	Amusing
Boring	
"They eat a food from a paste made from the seeds of a type of grass, cooked once and then burnt near a flame, which is smeared with fat from an animal. They eat this with the albumen from a bird. Traditionally they can only eat it at certain times of day:'	
Bizarre	Delightful
Interesting	Disturbing
Exotic	Normal
Disgusting	Amusing
Boring	
"Almost the entire population is addicted to a plant substance which they drink with water and other animal or plant substances. They speak openly about this addiction apparently without shame, and have evolved certain rituals around its use."	
Bizarre	Delightful
Interesting	Disturbing
Exotic	Normal
Disgusting	Amusing
Boring	
"Women seem to have a hard time. Modernisation only seems to have brought them more work to do and men don't respect them at all."	
Bizarre	Delightful
Interesting	Disturbing
Exotic	Normal
Disgusting	Amusing
Boring	

## Instructions (for 'I know a culture....')

### Part 1

Explain that this exercise is about our cultural impressions. When the description of a certain cultural practice is read out they must write down the first word or thought that occurs to them.

- There are no right and wrong answers and no-one will know what any individual wrote. It is only the group response that you are interested in. Do not censor your responses
- Make sure each participant has a pen and distribute copies of the activity to each person
- Read out the descriptions and they circle their responses. Stress it is their immediate impressions you want.

Give only a few seconds for each description.

### Part 2

Collect the sheets, shuffle and hand out again to participants and ask each participant to call out the word circled on their sheet (not what they wrote themselves) to each description.

- Write a few of these up on the flip chart. Explain, if they have not guessed, that the descriptions are from British culture.

The four "cultural activities" in "I know a culture" may be described as:

1. Keeping your coat on inside someone else's house shows you are not staying.
2. Boiled egg with toast for breakfast.
3. Drinking tea: "I'm gasping for a cuppa" 4 o'clock tea, etc.
4. Comment by Iranian Muslim woman about British women.

Ask if the participants' responses would have been the same if they had known what it was or it was described in another way.

### **Note**

The main point to bring out here is that it is easy to see one's own culture as normal and other cultures as strange or "exotic" (originating from another place)

### **Dear White Friend,**

When I was born I was black  
 When I grew up I was black  
 When I get sick I am black  
 When I get scared I am black  
 When I choke I am black  
 When I get embarrassed I am black  
 When I die I am black

But you white folks  
 When you were born you were pink  
 When you grow you are white  
 When you get sick you are green  
 When you get scared you are yellow  
 When you choke you are blue  
 When you get embarrassed you are red  
 And when you die you are purple  
 And you got the cheek to call me Coloured! [Anon.]

# multicultural church, intercultural habit

[aspiring beyond good intentions]

An intercultural way of being and living is premised on the abundant generosity of God made real through Jesus Christ. Within the framework of *vision2020*, we commend the multicultural church, intercultural charter.

In modelling a habit of generous lives we

1. will be open, trusting and joyful to the leading of God's Spirit
  - [Vision Statement 1 *Spirituality and Prayer*] [Acts 2:5-11; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18]
2. commit ourselves to deepening our discerning and re-reading of our biblical and theological bases for our intercultural life together
  - [Vision Statement 1 *Spirituality and Prayer*; Statement 2 *Identity*; Statement 6 *Evangelism*] [Isaiah 56:6-8; Isaiah 65:17-25; Revelation 21:1-7; Ruth; Matthew 1:1-17; Acts 10]
3. will affirm new and different experiences, recognizing a variety of expressions of the one faith
  - [Vision Statement 5 *Hospitality and Diversity*; Statement 3 *Christian Ecumenical Partnerships*] [Genesis 1:26; Psalm 133:1; Matthew 28:19; John 17:11,23; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Galatians 3:27-29]
4. will journey beyond our cultural comfort zones and boundaries
  - [Statement 8 *Global Partnerships* and Statement 4 *Community Partnerships*] [Jonah; Matthew 15:21-28; 28:19-20; Mark 7:24-30; Genesis 28:10-19; Acts 8:26-40]
5. will seek to become an enlarged, inclusive, welcoming, and justice-seeking community
  - [Vision Statement 2 *Identity*; Statement 9 *Justice and Peace* and Statement 10 *Integrity of Creation*] [Psalm 148; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 4:3-5; Revelation 7:9; Micah 6:8]
6. will engage in transformation of heart, mind, structure and policy, seeking habits that redress power imbalances, challenge systemic injustice, generously cultivate diverse leadership, and seek full participation of all
  - [Vision Statement 7 *Church Growth* and Statement 9 *Justice and Peace*] [Luke 19:1-10; John 10:10; Acts 10:34; Romans 12:1-2; Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 8:27-33; Luke 1:46-55; Luke 4:16-30; Romans 16:1-16]
7. will work intentionally towards mutuality in giving and sharing for all of us are in need and all must be mutually inconvenienced for the sake of the other and the gospel.
  - [Vision Statement 1 *Spirituality and Prayer*, Statement 5 *Hospitality and Diversity* and Statement 9 *Justice and Peace*] [Luke 7:18-23; Luke 10:25-37; John 4:1-39]
8. commit ourselves to the constant habit of self-examination, life-long learning, and reflection through on-going education, training, monitoring and evaluation of our intercultural engagement.
  - [Vision Statement 1 *Spirituality and Prayer*; Statement 2 *Identity*; Statement 7 *Church Growth* and Statement 9 *Justice and Peace*] [I Corinthians 9:1-33; 2 Corinthians 5:16-20; Philippians 3:12-16]



## Conversation 6 Policies and Practices

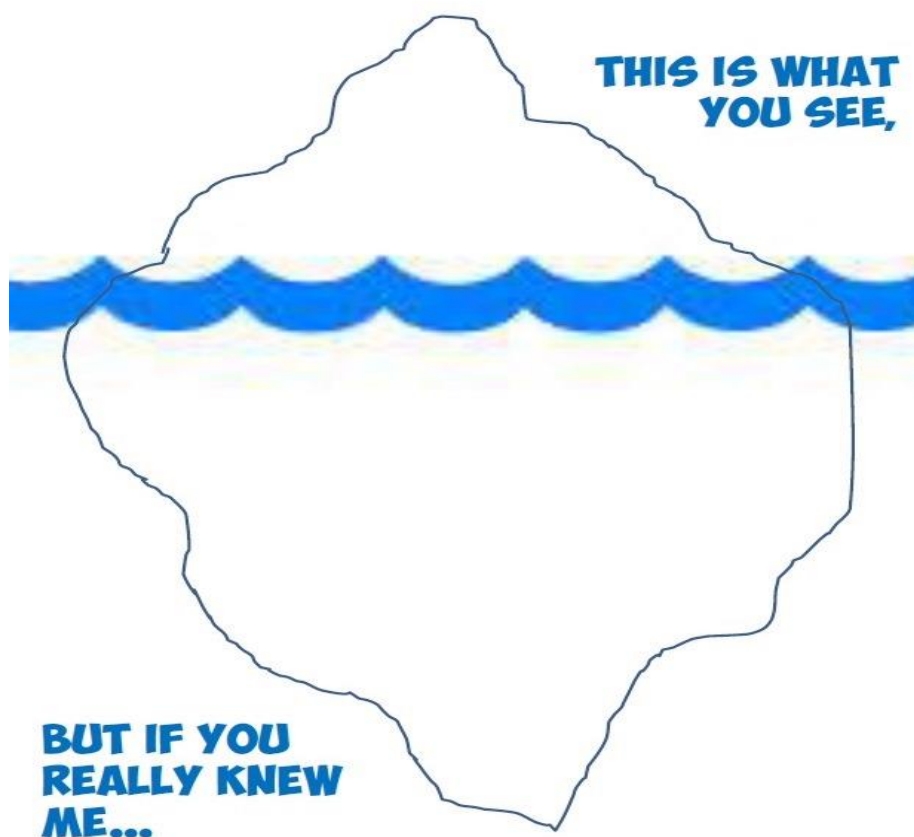
### Legislations UK

The Race Relations Act 1976 (as amended), (RR(A)Act 2000), places a legal duty on employers to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination, promote equality of opportunity and promote good race relations. Because of other current and pending legislation and the need to address all forms of discrimination, we need to note the extended legal requirements (six strands of diversity - age, Gender, Sexual Orientation, Religion & Belief, Race & Disability). There are a number of existing and pending acts that outlaw discrimination:

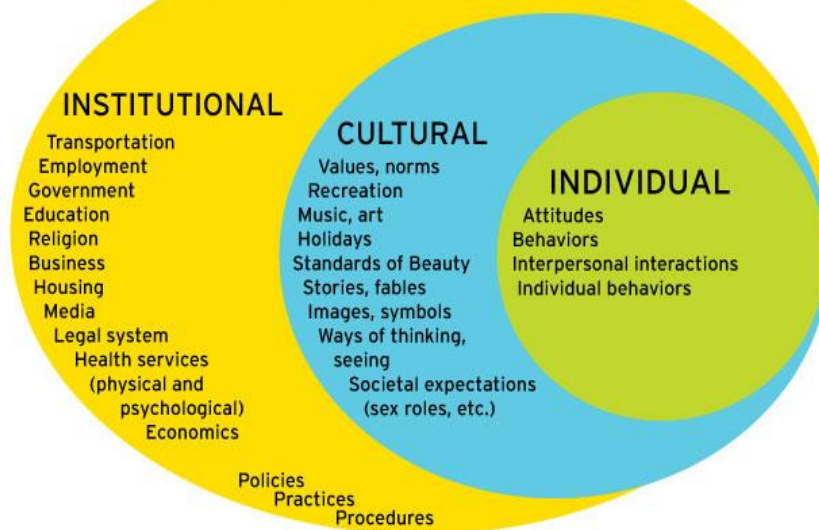
- **Equal Pay Act 1970 (as amended) (EPA 1970)** gives an individual a right to the same contractual pay and benefits as a person of the opposite sex in the same employment, where the man and the woman are doing: like work; work rated as equivalent; or work that is proved to be of equal value.
- **Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (SDA 1975)** provides remedies against discrimination on the grounds of gender and/or married status.
- **Race Relations Act 1976 (RRA 1976)** outlaws discrimination on the grounds of colour, race, ethnic or national origin.
- **Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA 1995)** covers employment (staff of 20+), access to goods, facilities, services, the sale/letting of land and property; defines disability and covers disability and long term illness.
- **Human Rights Act 1998 (HRA 1998)** bringing provisions from the European Convention on Human Rights into English and Scottish law.
- **The Sex Discrimination (Gender Reassignment) Regulations 1999 (SDR 1999)** makes it unlawful to discriminate against transsexual people on the grounds of gender in pay and treatment, in employment and vocational training.
- **Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 (RRA 2000)** places a three-part General Duty on all public authorities and an explicit range of Specific Duties; has a major impact on the role of the public sector in procurement and partnership.
- **Employment Act 2002 (EA 2000)** covers maternity, paternity, adoption leave; the right to request flexible working and gives protection for fixed term workers.
- **Race Relations (Amendment) Regulations 2002 (RRR 2002)** redefines indirect discrimination, prohibits harassment, changes burden of proof, provides remedy for post-employment victimisation.
- **Sex Discrimination Act 1975 (Amendment) Regulations 2003 (SDA 2003)** makes chief officers liable for unlawful acts committed by police officers in the course of their work.
- **Employment Equality (Religion and Belief) Regulations 2003 (EERBR 2003)** prohibits direct and indirect discrimination and harassment on grounds of religion or belief
- **Employment Equality (Sexual Orientation) Regulations 2003 (EESOR 2003)** prohibits direct and indirect discrimination and harassment on the grounds of sexual orientation.
- **Disability Discrimination Act (Amendment) Regulations 2003 (DDA)** extends discrimination protection to employees, contract workers, police officers and job applicants in employment type situations; prohibits harassment against disabled people on the grounds of disability, removes exclusion threshold, makes it unlawful to instruct employees or pressurise them to discriminate.
- **Gender Recognition Act 2004 (GRA 2004)** the purpose of this Act is to provide transsexual people with legal recognition in their acquired gender.

- **Civil Partnership Act 2004 (CPA 2004)** Enables same-sex couples to obtain legal recognition of their relationship by forming a civil partnership
- **Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (DDA 2005)** This act makes substantial changes to the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and imposes a duty on public bodies to produce a Disability Equality Scheme
- **Employment Equality (Age) Regulations 2006. (EEAR)** prohibits direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and victimization on the grounds of age in employment
- **The Equality Act 2010** Became law in October, 2010 replacing previous legislation (such as the Race Relations Act 1976 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1995) and ensures consistency in what employers and employees need to do to make their workplaces a fair environment and comply with the law.

#### Additional (optional) Resources



## EXPLORING AND TRANSFORMING THE LEVELS OF OPPRESSION



### Ten Affirmations for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry in the United Reformed Church

1. Continue to make a compelling biblical/theological case against racism and for.....
2. Identify, name and share information with each other regarding concrete programmes and initiatives in.....
3. Claim RJ Sunday, One World Week and similar appropriate occasions for dialogue and joined up work, leading to systemic change.
4. Take the changing landscape seriously and finds ways to understand the complexity of the issues. Draw on all disciplines/resources seriously, because the careful arguments and nuanced distinctions the various disciplines/groups posit can save us from simplistic exhortations that hinder effective advocacy and change.
5. Maintain a strong program of awareness training on the dynamics of racism, the interrelationship of injustices and the demands of justice for all. Our educational resources, including liturgical ones, need to be evaluated to ensure that they are consistent witnesses against all forms of marginalisation.
6. Continue our work of rigorous institutional self-examinations, searching for exclusionary practices embedded in the structures, politics and programmes of churches, and set goals for measuring our progress
7. Ensure that worship is an intentional witness for inclusion and therefore reflects the fullness of the Gospel, that is, a table for all.
8. Call for the churches' renewal of commitment to the struggle for equal human rights through advocacy and do joined up justice and advocacy work

9. Develop resources to address the issues related to racism and related forms of exclusion in the member churches' capacity and especially for our response to new immigrant and cultural groups.....
10. Encourage and enable intercultural dialogue within and among churches at all levels, as well as among members of the whole community.

Nurturing and living habits of inclusion is a formidable task, but it is not impossible. It demands both the conversion of individuals and the transformation of our ecclesial life together. We have good reasons for hope and persistence in struggle: we are not alone: God, who accompanies us is ever creating new possibilities.

Racial Justice Advocates Consultation  
April 8-9, 2011

### Why are people racist and Xenophobic?

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The economic explanation</b></p> <p>When societies are experiencing problems it is easy to blame an outsider, or scapegoat for taking jobs or housing. Blaming other ethnic groups and migrants for taking jobs or housing is a simple explanation for things like unemployment and poverty, but it ignores the real causes.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">How would you define a scapegoat?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The cultural explanation</b></p> <p>Prejudice about certain ethnic groups is part of the culture of most countries. People are taught to think in racial/ethnic terms, in their families, at school and through newspapers and books.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Is prejudice the child of ignorance? What do you think?</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The individual explanation</b></p> <p>Some people are unable to express their feelings and frustrations with life. They find an outlet for their frustrations by being hostile to easily identifiable groups such as people who look different (physical and observable)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">What features do people use to identify others as different?</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>The group explanation</b></p> <p>All people like to identify with a group or a number of groups. All groups are exclusive and must exclude certain people. People who are excluded from membership of a 'group' may face isolation, discrimination or worse.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Can you think of examples of these groups?</p>

Global and Intercultural Ministries  
August 2016

### Working the Angles – Four Worlds of Racism

There are four realms in which racism is manifest in this society: personal, interpersonal, institutional, and cultural. For change to be genuine and lasting, it must encompass all four of these realms. There are age-old debates about where change must begin or which realm is most important, but these four realms are inextricably related. They feed into one another and, even though change in one realm does not guarantee change in another, all are important and deserving of our time and attention.

**PERSONAL REALM:** encompasses our values, beliefs, attitudes, and feelings. Racism is expressed in the personal realm in such things as fear of difference, prejudice, and stereotypes. Examples include the belief that the dominant groups' cultural and religious traditions are inherently superior or the belief that the minority groups are less capable of academic excellence than the dominant group.

**INTERPERSONAL REALM:** individuals act on their fears, prejudices, and stereotypes. These behaviours, which can be conscious or unconscious, can be expressed as discrimination, condescension, verbal abuse or physical violence. Examples include such things as avoiding contact with minority group or dominant exhibiting paternalism in their interactions with minorities

Racism in the **INSTITUTIONAL REALM** finds expression in policies, practices, rules, or procedures that have been formally adopted or are informally in place. These policies, practices, rules, and procedures function, intentionally or unintentionally, to grant unearned privileges to the dominant group of people and to disadvantage minorities. Examples of institutional racism include such things as racial profiling and searching for new staff members of a congregation through predominantly group friendship, publicity, and colleague networks.

The **CULTURAL REALM** refers to what groups value as right, true, beautiful, normal and worthy of our time and attention. Our cultural norms or beliefs affect what we understand to be normal or appropriate styles of behaviour, expression, and thought. Cultural racism is manifest when the cultural values of the dominant racial group are considered the only acceptable values. Examples of cultural racism include such things as images of Christ as reflecting the interest of the dominant group or the belief that classical music and hymns of the culture of the dominant group are "real" church music.