



MISSION COUNCIL 23-25 March 2007

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Committee for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry

Audit of Church Structures, Policies, Procedures & Practices for barriers to full Participation of Minority Ethnic People

(Assembly 2005 Resolution 34 c) & d): Developing Multicultural Ministry)

1. Introduction

1.1 General Assembly 2005 prophetically declared the United Reformed Church to be a Multicultural Church¹, and committed to practical steps for developing multicultural ministry². Resolution 34 sets out several practical steps to assist the denomination grow as a multicultural Church, and indeed become a clear and visible reflection of its diverse membership at all levels of its life and witness. Resolution 34 d) sets out the audit task and the subject of this report.

Resolution 34 d):

General Assembly authorises the Committee for Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry to conduct an audit of church structures, policies, procedures and practices for the presence of barriers to full participation of minority ethnic people, and to report with recommendation to Mission Council no later than October 2006.

1.2 An ecumenical Audit Group led by the Churches Commission for Racial Justice (CCRJ) was formed in autumn 2005 to take forward Resolution 34 d). Changes in the structure of CCRJ at the end of 2005 made it necessary to change the leadership of the United Reformed Church (URC) audit process. In spring 2006 the Anglican Southwark Diocese graciously agreed to Mr Delbert Sandiford, their Executive Officer for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns, chairing the ecumenical Audit Group.

1.3 In addition to Resolution 34 d), the ecumenical Audit Group was authorised by the March 2006 Mission Council to include Resolution 34 c) as part of the audit process to avoid duplication as there were clear overlaps in the tasks involved.

Resolution 34 c):

General Assembly instructs the Secretaries for Training, Ministries, and Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry to evaluate the accessibility to minority ethnic people of the systems of candidacy and training for Ministers of Word and Sacrament, Church Related Community Workers, lay preachers, and lay leaders, and to report with recommendations to Mission Council no later than March 2006.

Further, the Audit Group was asked to report to the October 2006 Mission Council on both parts d) and c) of Resolution 34. The ecumenical Audit Group, however, needed more time to do its work and at the October 2006 Mission Council it was given further leave to complete its task and bring its final report to Mission Council in March 2007.

¹ Resolution 52, General Assembly 2005 Book of Reports

² Resolution 34 a) – e), General Assembly 2005 Book of Reports

1.4 This Audit Report is the end result of the audit process conducted by the ecumenical Audit Group in just less than twelve months. It was clear to the Audit Group from the outset that it needed to focus on specific areas of ministry and levels of the Church's life because of time constraints. This report is therefore not claiming to be exhaustive but rather to present emerging snapshots and trends to indicate where and how the URC might encourage future growth in minority ethnic participation in the life and work of the denomination. The report will also highlight some of the gaps that need following up.

1.5 The ecumenical Audit Group consisted of Mr Delbert Sandiford, Executive Officer for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns for the Anglican Southwark Diocese and chair of the Audit Group; Revd Wale Hudson-Roberts, Racial Justice Officer for the Baptist Union of Great Britain; Revd Fiona Thomas, Training Officer for Thames North Synod; and Mrs Katalina Tahaafe-Williams, URC Secretary for Racial Justice & Multicultural Ministry (RJ&MM). Ms Michelle Marcano, URC Personnel and Human Resources Secretary, and Revd Dr Andrew Prasad, Convener of RJ&MM contributed as consultants to the Audit Group.

1.6.1 Methodology

- a) The Audit Group adopted different approaches that would yield information and perspectives within a short space of time:
 - i) Agreed key questions for conversations with specific church structures, leaders, councils, committees, and networks
 - ii) Face-to-face conversations with key church leaders, committees, and networks
 - iii) Consideration and evaluation of relevant published materials
- b) Recommendations are summarised as resolutions to Mission Council at the end of the report.

1.6.2 Acronyms

The following acronyms have been used in the Report:

BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
CCRJ	Churches Commission for Racial Justice
EMLOMA	Ethnic Minority Lay and Ordained Ministers' Association
RJ&MM	Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry
RJA	Racial Justice (& Multicultural Ministry) Advocates
URC	United Reformed Church

2. Commendations

2.1 The Audit Group commends the United Reformed Church for its vision and courage, professing to be a Multicultural Church in 2005, and proactively seeking to grow as a truly inclusive Church. The Church, now more than ever, still has a responsibility to take a moral lead in society and to model the kingdom of Christ to the world – a community of hope for inclusiveness, harmony, and respect. The URC in the UK and Europe is now widely recognised as a leader in multicultural ministry. As a denomination it is a source of inspiration as it boldly adopts the vision of the

multicultural church as a moral and theological imperative, together with its associated economic, political, and social implications.

2.2 The URC is commended for enabling and empowering the work of RJ&MM Committee and Secretary which in the past few years have taken forward many of the tasks involved in growing and building a truly Multicultural Church. The issue of black and minority ethnic involvement and participation in the life of the Church is a critical issue as recognised by Assembly 2005 Resolution 34. Much work in this area have been done through the **Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry Advocates Network** (RJA), the **Ethnic Minority Lay and Ordained Ministers' Association** (EMLOMA), and increasingly so through the **URC Minority Ethnic Conferences**.

2.3 It needs noting that the Audit Group's research had to rely to a large extent on people's perspectives and experiences due to a lack of statistical information and data. This is obviously an area for further attention for such data can help us identify what issues are there and form the questions as to why they are there and how we can address them. However, the Audit Group wishes to acknowledge the willingness and openness of individuals and groups that helped make its tasks less difficult, and the valuable contribution every person and group consulted made to the audit process. It especially wishes to acknowledge the positive responses it received from the Assembly Committees it consulted with and their Secretaries, noting in particular Ministries, Training, Communication & Editorial, Nominations, and Equal Opportunities committees. The Group was especially encouraged by their willingness to take on board the issues and concerns it raised, and the commitment to follow them through where it was identified further work needs to be done. The Group also wishes to commend the leadership of the United Reformed Church, in particular the Synod Moderators, the General and Deputy General Secretaries for their expressed commitment to making their contribution to increasing BME participation and involvement at all levels of the life of the Church.

3. The Audit Group's Findings

3.1 The Audit Group's enquiry into BME participation in the life of the URC were focused in these specific areas:

- Leadership & development
- Theological Training & the Candidacy Process
- Training for Learning and Serving & Lay Preaching
- Elders Training and Selection
- Publications and Media Representations
- Youth and Children Programmes

The Group met and/or consulted with Synod Training Officers, Assembly Secretaries, Assembly Committees, Synod Moderators, the URC Secretariat, synod and local church networks and groups, and evaluated Theological Training materials at Assembly and regional/local levels, Ministerial Information Packs, Elders' Training materials, and Reform Magazine.

3.2 The Audit Group felt good about particular areas where work had been done or is being done to increase BME involvement and participation:

- Enquirers Conferences ensures BME representation
- Diverse images depicted on candidacy information packs
- Equal Opportunities Committee periodic ethnic monitoring
- RJ&MM Multicultural Youth Programme
- RJ&MM's work in collaboration with Nominations and Equal Opportunities Committees to create a BME Skills database

- Increased level of observance of Racial Justice Sunday in the URC
- The provision of multicultural ministry and diversity training resources like the **'URC Multicultural Ministry Toolkit'**, and the **'We Belong: Celebrating Cultural Diversity and Living Hospitality'** packs to help equip the churches to become multicultural communities of Christ.
- The URC Secretaries for Personnel and Human Resources and RJ&MM have put in place a strategy for cross-cultural and racism awareness training primarily for all Assembly staff and Synod Moderators, but will also be made available to all levels and councils of the Church in due course. This training is planned to commence in autumn 2007.
- Increasing growth in the URC Annual Minority Ethnic conferences where it is envisaged that BME skills audit will make a huge impact. In addition Ministries 'Road Shows' will not only increase the number of BME in leadership in the future, but will also encourage and support leadership development within the BME communities.

3.3 The Audit Group did find some areas of concern and wishes to draw attention to these:

- a) A marked lack of BME representation in leadership at all levels of the life of the Church, for example, at the synod level there is no BME synod moderator at present. This is caused by a combination of things, from the lack of available pool of suitably confident and able BME, to lack of accessibility to appointment processes, to institutional racism and so on. Leadership is very important especially as encouragement and visible role models for the younger BME generations.
- b) Absence of home grown BME in much of URC publications including 'Reform' creates a vortex of invisibility of BME as if they do not exist. The diversity that is depicted reflects a strong world mission outlook. This leaves the BME membership in the URC feeling as if they do not matter. This contributes to feelings of marginalisation, and reluctance to come forward to participate, and when people do not feel encouraged they do not feel confident to get involved. The lack of visible involvement makes it harder for changes to take place.
- c) Ethnic monitoring is almost non-existent, and when there is some form of monitoring in place, certain key areas are not included, for example, the elders, ministers, candidates for ministry, leadership and governance and so on. The Group affirms the importance of ethnic monitoring taking place but it must do so in such a way that it is an integral and routine part of the way things are done in the URC. The Group would suggest including ethnic monitoring in the URC Annual Returns. This way it will be easier for people to see the need for such monitoring, as well as having a conscientising effect on the whole church so that all can work together to ensure all God's people are given the opportunity to participate fully in the life of the Church.
- d) Lack of cross-cultural and racism awareness training routinely offered to key people, groups and leaders involved in the process of discerning ministry. The training resources are available but the issue seems to be lack of authority and will at local level, for instance, to implement such training.
- e) The lay and ordained training materials evaluated, e.g. 'A Course for Elders', generally treat the audience or potential clients as if they are all from the same cultural backgrounds. The Group is aware that some of these materials like the elders' course have been in use for some years and are probably due for some updating. If this is so then it would be timely to ensure the updated versions are as culturally sensitive and inclusive as

possible. This can happen through BME representation in whatever strategy is put in place for updating such resources and materials.

4. Catch the Vision & New Structures

- 4.1 The Audit Group is especially concerned with the changes in structures especially in regards to the disappearance of district councils, and the reduction in size of General Assembly. The Group's main concern is to do with how these changes may affect BME representation and participation in the life of the URC especially at the level of governance and leadership. Currently the Group is aware of the difficulty of getting BME representation to General Assembly. A reduction in the size of General Assembly is likely to increase that difficulty even more in the future. The Group would want to suggest that special arrangements for representation be made for BME, women, and young people. If such arrangements are already in place for any group other than BME, then we would suggest that such arrangements be extended to BME.
- 4.2 Another concern is to do with the impact the disappearance of district councils will have in the participation of BME at regional and synod levels. It is important that synods and local churches are encouraged to be diligent in ensuring that there is BME representation and involvement at this level of the Church's life. One way to try and address this is to target the provision for alternate delegates at synod meetings, and also at Mission Council, as opportunities for BME to participate and to gain experience and exposure.

5. Leadership & Accountability for Racial Inclusiveness

- 5.1 The United Reformed Church is a conciliar Church. This makes it difficult for the Audit Group to identify where authority and responsibility lie in terms driving forward the action to make racial-ethnic inclusiveness a reality in the URC. At the Assembly level of course are the Racial Justice and Multicultural Ministry Committee and Secretary who discharge an enabling role, developing resources, keeping the score, shaping policies, and raising awareness. They cannot enforce compliance. Their role is primarily a resourcing and influencing one.
- 5.2 At the local level the RJAs and EMLOMA act as 'eyes' and 'ears' on the ground and their role is to call attention to the needs on the ground but they are not empowered to ensure compliance. They also can only influence and persuade.
- 5.3 General Assembly passes resolutions giving authority for work to be undertaken to make the URC a multicultural and racially inclusive Church. These resolutions are then handed along to synods and local churches through the conciliar chain. But the responsibility for implementing the resolution in the local church, which is the bedrock of implementation, must lie with an individual. This is a common feature of the conciliar decision making process. Therein lies the biggest challenge for the multicultural vision. The lack of a clear point of accountability for delivering racial inclusiveness creates not only uncertainty but also at worst inaction. Outcomes are expected but no one has any authority for making them happen.
- 5.4 In this situation we look to the exercise and influence of leadership to move things forward. Culturally organisations look to leaders to help them solve problems and deliver outcomes. In the United Reformed Church the key leadership are:
- Moderator of Assembly
 - The General and Deputy General Secretaries in the central office
 - The Synod Moderators at regional level
 - The Ministers at local churches level

As already stated, in the conciliar church situation it cannot be a command and control style of leadership. It has to be one of influencing, defining what needs to be done to achieve full BME participation, and helping those in positions to deliver to bring it about. They may not have authority to enforce compliance, but they do have influence and they can do that by preaching, teaching, resourcing, and encouraging. In that situation, such leaders must be fully recognised as the principal points of leverage in making racial inclusiveness a reality at regional and local levels. They need to be sensitised, resourced, and supported for this purpose, and be required to keep the Assembly and synods informed of how the work is progressing.

- 5.5 The point to emphasise that in the conciliar decision making situation the influence and impact of leadership in inspiring and moving the church to make needed changes cannot be underestimated. And in the cause of achieving full BME participation and growing a truly multicultural and inclusive United Reformed Church, leadership influence is absolutely critical.

6. Gaps in the Audit Enquiry

- 6.1 The Audit Group felt keenly the many gaps left in its work due to the pressure of time and the demands on the individual members' by their own organisations and jobs. The Group especially wishes to record its disappointment not to have the time to consult more fully with the Youth and Children's committee and staff. However, the Group is aware of ongoing co-operation and collaboration between the RJ&MM and Youth Secretaries, to ensure this issue of BME participation are taken forward by FURY and its leadership.
- 6.2 The Group also regrets that it was not able to consult fully with the URC Theological Colleges but is very hopeful given the positive response of the Training Committee to take these concerns forward. It is especially pleased that the Secretaries for Training and RJ&MM together with the principal for Northern College have been tasked by the Training Committee to follow up the concerns of the Audit Group in relation to that area of the Church's life.

7 Recommendations

- 7.1 The Audit Group on behalf of the Racial Justice & Multicultural Ministry Committee presents its final report to Mission Council as a draft version inviting Mission Council's comments and guidance; and asks Mission Council to receive its final report and affirm the URC RJ&MM programme which is tasked with taking forward the huge amount of work needed to build a multiculturally inclusive United Reformed Church;
- 7.2 The Audit Group on behalf of RJ&MM asks that Mission Council adopts the following resolutions:

Resolutions

- 1. Mission Council authorises the Secretaries for Communication & Editorial and Racial Justice & Multicultural Ministry to draft an ethnic monitoring form to be included in the United Reformed Church Annual Returns.**
- 2. Mission Council encourages the synods to support and enable the URC Minority Ethnic Conferences which not only affirm the gifts black and minority ethnic members bring to the life of the URC, but they also help develop BME leadership to offer for leadership in the life of the Church now and into the future.**
- 3. Mission Council urges synods and local churches to use the 'Multicultural Ministry Toolkit' and 'We Belong' training pack to help**

- local church members and groups become cross-culturally aware and literate.
4. **Mission Council affirms the Training committee in its commitment to developing learning centres that are culturally sensitive and aware, and encourages that committee to ensure all lay training materials it is responsible for developing are culturally sensitive and inclusive.**
 5. **Mission Council instructs the Assembly Arrangements committee to ensure that any special arrangements for particular groups, like youth, to be represented in the new and reduced General Assembly be made applicable to BME representation as well.**
 6. **Mission Council encourages synods and local churches to be culturally aware during the process of seeking representation to synod meetings and to Mission Council and to use the provision for alternate delegates as an opportunity to involve BME participation.**
 7. **Mission Council encourages those in leadership at all levels of the Church's life to be intentional in promoting multicultural inclusiveness influencing and inspiring people to make the needed changes**

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