Stepney Focus Group Summary – February 2023

Thank you to all who participated in the Stepney Focus group consultations.

The feedback from which is being used to shape the role of Dean of Racial Justice and provide guidance for other areas also exploring models of delivery for the future.

In summary, the findings of the report indicate that psychological safety was a big issue with those on the receiving end of racist actions yet to feel safe in not only articulating their experiences but in the certainty of an appropriate response. The conflicting nature of the church's language around racial justice and the experience of minorities was felt to be an inhibitor to wider engagement and damaging to one's own self-belief heightening the importance of a team approach to the role to provide support across a number of priorities. A stronger stance against acts of racism was deemed necessary underpinned by policies and processes that will rebuild trust and allow for radical steps to engender greater inclusivity at all levels.

The key priorities were noted as being able to support the broader racial justice work across the diocese, racial justice seminars/conference attendance, recruitment, appointments and training, placement of GMH/UKME clergy in parishes and leading on the racial diversity and inclusion strategy as part of the Stepney Area plan. A team approach was preferable of between 3 – 5 people to share the emotional burden that often comes with working in this area.

Standing on the shoulders of those that have gone before was felt to provide the necessary leap to galvanise efforts and avoid the feeling of always being at the beginning of the journey. It was clear that greater progress needs to be made against concrete actions and communicated more widely. There was also a sense that the senior team within Stepney might need to examine how they can make room for different voices so the transformative work that should be ongoing can continue.

Without your input we are unlikely to see the change we desire. Your involvement could make a real difference. If you feel called to engage in racial justice work, why not send an email to stephanie.ajayi2btg@gmail.com to discuss how this could be shaped.