

## **Church of God of Prophecy Region 4 (West Midlands)**

We accept that like many organisations and individuals in our community and beyond who have suffered or witnessed racism, we too have been silent on the issue for too long. Generations of black people have suffered the injustice of racism in silence, feeling powerless to do anything. The horrific murder of George Floyd, caught on camera, has highlighted the level of brutality inflicted on black people in America. This has generated much anger and has galvanised and empowered black people to take action and demand change. This has been expressed through mostly peaceful but passionate protests in the US, the U.K. and in various cities around the world.

In the words of Reverend Al Sharpton, "George Floyd's story has been the story of black folks for many generations..." Although some elements of our story in the U.K. may be different, we do have a story and we identify and stand with our brothers and sisters in the US.

We recognise that in the U.K. black people are treated with a greater level of suspicion, and we are three times more likely to be stopped by police. When convicted of a crime, black people are given longer prison sentences. The current Covid 19 pandemic has highlighted that we are more likely to die from the virus than white people. It is suggested that the reason for this is essentially that we are prone to have underlying health misuses. However, what has not been explained is the link between our poor health and the impact of historic adverse decisions inspired by institutional racism. The experience of the Windrush generation were the seeds of much of the current health issues. Poor housing in poor areas, denial of jobs for which they were more than qualified, poorly paid jobs compounded by even lower pay than their white counterparts doing the same work, poor education, poor access to health service, and the list goes on. We therefore recognised that in many respects these experiences forced black people into poverty often resulting in poor physical and mental health.

Racism is defined as; "the inability or refusal to recognise the rights, needs, dignity, or value of people of particular races or geographical origin; It is belief that some races are superior to others, and the behaviour which is the result of this belief."

We declare that the Bible, God's word, teaches us that God has created all people equal. Acts 17:26 *"And He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their lands and territories."*

Therefore, we believe when it comes to humanity, equality is not up for debate, since God has dealt with that issue by creating us all equal. We believe the real issue is one of privilege and the exercise of power. It is the belief by some that the privileges gained by an accident of history or birth equate to superiority. Therefore, we should not pursue equality as if it is something held by one race who can dispense it to us in order to make us equal to them.

The equality we pursue is equality of rights, opportunities, dignity, value, and the distribution of wealth and other resources.

As the Church of God of Prophecy in the West Midlands, we want to say that we not only understand the issues, but they have been our experience. Therefore, we stand in solidarity with our community in speaking with one voice challenging both the mindset and the structures which support racism in the U.K. and beyond. We support peaceful protests while recognising the need to protect ourselves, our families and the wider community from the danger of Covid19, by practicing social distancing. We have already lost too many from our community.

As a church we will not pretend that we have the resources to solve all the social issues of our society. This would only create unrealistic expectations resulting in disappointment and criticism. However, we undertake to do the following;

**1. Work with other churches, organisations and individuals to hold Police, Local and National Government, Schools etc, to account by;**

- Connecting with Local Councillors and MP's
- Keeping abreast of government and Council reports and asking questions
- Actively encouraging representation on Police Committees etc
- Making our buildings available for meetings and activities

**2. Speak Out Against Injustices**

- Making joint statements from church on major issues.
- Creating an environment for individuals to speak openly about racism and discrimination and its impact.
- Providing practical support and representation for people suffering racism.
- Modeling diversity, justice and equity in and between churches/denominations

**3. Active Involvement**

- Providing representatives on committees/boards
- Encouraging attendance and participation in ward and other Council meetings to keep informed and helping shape/challenge decisions and policies.
- Encouraging/facilitating petitions on important issues
- Encouraging active participation in peaceful protests.
- Providing advice and information on health, education, employment, finance etc.
- Encouraging and supporting political involvement in order to influence change from within.

**4. Support Black Business to Build Strong Economy/Wealth**

- Encouraging community to buy from black businesses.
- Providing advice and training for young people in how to start a business.
- Encouraging ownership (homes, property etc.)