



Rotting from the Head:

Radical progressive activism and
the Church of England

**Jim McConalogue, Rachel Neal
and Jack Harris**

Foreword by Tom Harris

CIVITAS

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Foreword

Jim McConalogue's, Rachel Neal's and Jack Harris's excellent paper is timely. In truth it could equally well have been written about any number of the great institutions that are essential to our national life. The Police, the National Trust, the NHS, the national broadcasting service, our great universities and many other institutions that the vast majority of the British public, irrespective of their politics, instinctively cherish, love and support because they understand their purpose and see them as part of the very fabric of the kind of Britain in which they were born and raised.

But the focus here is on the Church of England because it is so completely central to so much of what we all experience every day. Regardless of your religion or whether or not you've ever been into a church, it affects all of us because Christianity and the Church inform nearly all aspects of our national life. Our constitution, our language, our law, our architecture, our art, our music – even our calendar (2021 years since what?) are all informed by Christianity. Our Head of State is also Supreme Governor of the established Church. We have Church schools and we take our holidays at Christmas, Easter, Whitsun and All Saints. As the authors state in their conclusion, it is simply impossible to understand this country without understanding its Christian heritage and the Church's central role in our national life since the Reformation.

And that role has traditionally been all the greater in moments of national crisis. In World War Two, a National Day of Prayer immediately preceded the miracle evacuation of 300,000 troops from the Dunkirk beaches. But in the pandemic of 2020/21, the Church of England abandoned the national stage. Instead of calling for a National Day of Prayer, the Church has willingly shut its doors without a whisper of protest. Instead of preaching the Gospel of Christ, and calling its people to prayer, this paper shows that the Church's senior leaders in its 42 dioceses have instead been genuflecting to a form of cultural Marxist idolatry which represents a complete departure from the Church's central purpose and risks making it unrecognisable to the grass roots members who support it.

And it is that separation of the head from the body that is becoming alarmingly recognisable in so many of our national institutions. The state broadcaster, instinctively trusted globally for its reliability, caught conspiring, on a vast scale, to deceive the public it is funded by and serves. The NHS, whose staff have been heroes through the pandemic, covering up shocking scandals in its maternity units. The National Trust hectoring and lecturing its members on white privilege. The police's prioritisation of hate crime while bending the knee at violent, statue toppling street protests as 80% of burglaries go unsolved, and knife crime is rife in London. Cambridge University's Vice-Chancellor curbing free speech and launching a sinister snooper's website to report on its own academics who choose not to conform. The 'de-colonisation' of Shakespeare's plays by the RSC. The removal of books from the British Library. The common theme is weak and/or politicised leadership out of touch with the people they serve and the great mass of the British people who instinctively want to support them.

British civic society is rotting from the head as the great institutions of our national life fall prey to institutional capture. This paper focuses on the Church but it serves as an exhortation to the Prime Minister to get a grip and set about restoring leadership into our civic institutions that understands their central purpose so as to regain the trust and support of the British public they serve. Whether it is Archbishops, Bishops, Chief Constables, Vice-Chancellors, or the leadership of our national arts, museums, heritage, cultural and broadcasting organisations, there is a shocking crisis in leadership in British civic life such that the head has been severed from the body that supports it.

This report's focus on the Church of England serves to illustrate the point. It is in crisis because its leadership is simultaneously weak and politicised. Its focus on racism, climate 'emergency' and unconscious bias is symptomatic of institutional capture. The result is a Church losing its ability to minister at local level because it is making expensive appointments at diocesan level while closing local parish churches and making vicars redundant. The focus on racism sits awkwardly with its apparent silence on things which a truly caring Christian Church might be expected to care deeply about. The breakdown of family life and absent fathers which disproportionately affects Caribbean Heritage families in the UK or the knife crime crisis which results in so many deaths of young black people in urban Britain. A Church informed by its Gospel mission rather than by Marxist ideology would surely not behave this way.

But it is the pandemic that has really highlighted the complete collapse in the CofE's leadership and its sense of national mission. The Archbishop of Canterbury has been conspicuous by his absence from the national stage at the very moment when he really needed to step up and lead.

Local congregations feel badly let down and the Church has tragically missed a golden opportunity to remind the country of its importance in our national life at both a community and a national level.

Jim McConalogue's, Rachel Neal's and Jack Harris's paper is a big wake up call to Justin Welby and comes not a moment too soon.

Tom Harris

June 2021

Introduction

This report surveys the growing adoption of ultra-progressive values by the Church of England. It can seem at first sight that this change has happened rapidly in response to the Extinction Rebellion campaigns since 2019 and Black Lives Matter protests last year, but this change or collapse in British institutions has been happening for some time and is related to their overall decline. This report looks at the three aspects most associated with ultra-progressivism – those who persistently allege systemic racism and institutional racism in society, climate catastrophists, and the application of unconscious bias training – and the ways in which these ideas have been implemented at the national and local level of the Church.

What is ultra-progressivism? This report focuses on two of the most prominent political campaigns associated with this worldview – racial justice and climate alarmism – but there are common themes across the wider movement. Ultra-progressives simultaneously hold a utopian and pessimistic view of society and the planet. They argue human beings are not fallen but dangerous in their capacity to destroy the world or participate in race relations. In their view, best is not good enough and only the possibility of perfect race relations or ‘zero’ emissions will redeem the world. This is nearly a contradiction in terms as utopians usually have an optimistic view of human beings and progress. But it

is perfectly reasonable to expect this one-sided worldview to run next to a wider intolerance of liberal ideas such as free speech. Indeed, ultra-progressives take these views to the extreme and are intolerant of different perspectives – usually reassured by those who hold similar views to them and perplexed by the many varied experiences that exist outside of their groups.

To examine this change, it can be helpful to look at what has happened to the Church and to place it in the wider context of a cultural shift in British institutions. It is commonly noted that throughout Britain, institutions such as the family, the police, schools or the Church, are being swept under this ultra-progressive movement.¹ What is often overlooked in this discussion is the extent to which the main national institutions, as a whole and pluralistically, once constituted a (certain type of) just society which was accepted and passed on from one generation to the next. This is no longer the case. The decline in authority of said institutions is leading to an increasing sentiment inside them that they need to be validated, justified or legitimated through a form of consent or perspective on justice which, in our time, is only clearly articulated by ultra-progressives.

Using our benchmark of ultra-progressivism as an idea that is both extremely pessimistic and idealistic about the world, this effect of institutional decline can be seen throughout society. Previous generations are considered to have ‘polluted’ the planet, so it is justified that children and their interests should take precedence instead. As the police are considered ‘institutionally racist’, it is proposed by some that it is simply abolished. The idea that ‘all knowledge is power’ has led to the university and schools system itself being colonised by a ‘decolonisation’ movement.

This report set out to investigate the scale of support for unquestioned radical agendas alleging ‘systemic racism’ in English society, the understanding and use of ‘unconscious biases’ and prescribing a ‘climate emergency’ doctrine within the Church of England. Its analysis began by simply examining the reported instances of clergy involvement in campaign messages and doctrines across the 42 dioceses.² By observing and recording the involvement of the appointed Bishops, vicars, Rectors, ministers or other clergy in those campaigns – particularly since the rise of Black Lives Matter, Extinction Rebellion and diversity training campaigns over the past two years – we found that some measurement could be made of the clergy-adopted progressivist values within each diocese.

What surprises many in society is that institutions have in many cases accepted these propositions without question, but the reason this is happening is because their authority – which was once taken as a given – has declined. This has meant a new form of validation is required, which has been provided by ultra-progressiveness. In effect, such ideas are pushing at an open door only to find that the people inside are already anxious about their new role in society and how to maintain their importance. This report looks at how that change has come about within the Church of England.

It is apparent to those concerned that British institutions are travelling in the wrong direction. Two types of responses are required in order to resolve this. First, we must expect more from our institutions in the future. The response from the Church of England, and indeed many institutions in this country in response to ongoing protests throughout 2019 and 2020, has resembled a new form of cultural acquiescence with politicised campaigns. Marginalising their true purpose, institutions have forgotten their unique role in civil society. In contrast to individuals, institutions stand ‘above’ us, existing

before and after the current mood of public opinion, and many of them are endowed with a 'Royal Charter' for that effect. Institutions by definition should not feel the pressure to conform to prevailing wisdom and should promote, or at least retain, their intrinsic cause or purpose in the knowledge that such mission is principally why they exist. The need or desire to be seen to be representative of current or prevailing opinion in the context of last summer's protests, even if such ideas run fundamentally against their foundational purpose, concerns many ordinary people in Britain.

Second, there is also a new responsibility from the public and political leaders to defend the national institutions. The Church still has a role to play in British society. No one can doubt that Britain is, and increasingly so, a secular country today. But it is difficult to pass through life in Britain without encountering the presence of the Church at least once. It represents a significant portion of the constitution, with the monarch holding the title 'Defender of the faith and supreme governor of the Church of England.' Members of Parliament are required to be sworn in by swearing an oath of allegiance to the Queen and, in many cases, this follows the Church tradition.³ The calendar and traditions also follow the Christian seasons, which is most easily recognised in Christenings. The Church's role in society is ceremonial, but still exists as a British institution and should be supported as such.

New mission: swimming with the tide of social activism

In an article for *The Spectator*⁴ a rural parish volunteer, Emma Thompson, described the Church's intention to restructure after the pandemic. She wrote how due to the impact the lockdown has had on the Church's finances the leadership has

considered it necessary to put in place a major restructuring of its hierarchy. This process of centralisation was happening at a time, she said, when the local dioceses of one area were still advertising a role for a CEO at an expensive salary, despite making '61 parish clergy posts redundant' at the same time. This plan, she goes on, for the senior leadership to impose a 'management system on its parishes nationally' would represent, in her opinion, the 'biggest act of Church vandalism since the dissolution of the monasteries.'

There is a strong sense of policy symmetry between the process of centralisation and the Church's turn towards societal activism rather than spiritual mission. That is to say, as the Church continues to grow from the centre in its appointments, it is increasingly 'out of touch' with the sentiments of committed parishioners across the dioceses. As the final discussion in this report shows, the Church is beginning to realise its new worldview of ultra-progressivism through a major restructuring from the top of its mission and purpose. The 'Lament to Action Report'⁵ from the Church's Anti-Racism Taskforce intends to create dozens of new roles and purposes for professionals and managers inside the Church at a time when, as Emma Thompson showed, the Church in places across England are experiencing significant financial difficulties due to the lockdown. What these policies look like, and how the creation of bureaucrats will advance the Church's 'new mission' for ultra-progressivism, is explored in the final section of this report.

All these policies have implications for the way the Church perceives both itself and its mission to the public. From the beginning of the 'Lament to Action' report, the authors make clear what the Church can achieve if it pursues the justice the Taskforce believes is necessary. It says:

'We urge the Archbishops and the whole Church which we are a part to act now to address the causes and consequences of racial sin in our Church, and to seize the missional opportunities offered in our report to both the benefit of the body of Christ and the mission of God'.

The placement, or interaction, between the foundational and proper message of the Church and racism is significant, as it shows how the Church's focus has changed from spiritual well-being to societal change. Indeed, as the 'Lament to Action' Report shows, a similar perspective was adopted in 1999 when Bishop John Sentamu, one of the advisers to the Macpherson report, drafted a separate report to the senior bodies of the Church of England. In that report, he indicated that matters relating to racial justice were 'critical not only as a matter of justice but also for the growth and development of the church's life.'⁶ The message, in 1999 and today, is essentially that the cause of racial justice presents an opportunity for the Church to grow. It represents a change from a spiritual or faithful mission of Christ to societal activism. In all the Anti-Racism Taskforce's recommendations, one is left increasingly with the feeling that the effort or resources of the Church are *more* justified when they are focussed on delivering its mission to UKME populations. This has significant implications for the way the Church perceives itself as it suggests that the Church is in doubt of its fundamental message *unless* it is prioritised or redirected in the spirit of social activism.

This new perspective of the Christian mission is mirrored across the dioceses. As the evidence in this report shows, during the Black Lives Matter protests last summer many church leaders in communities across the country were seen to be presenting their institutions as places where social justice can be achieved. In Chester, for example, church

leaders suggested that racial justice is a ‘kingdom of God issue’.⁷ In Manchester the dioceses held an event called ‘Protesting through Prayer’ to reflect on the Black Lives Matter protesters.⁸ ‘When Christians stand together to say “Black Lives Matter”, we offer a Christ-model that teaches we are all made in the image of God’, said the Racial Adviser to the Bishop in Bristol.⁹

The evidence shows a new perception or role for the institution. Clergy statements reflect a Church that increasingly perceives itself as a place exclusively for social justice activists to realise their ambitions. The message appears to be: ‘if you believe society is institutionally racist, join us.’ It reveals, implicitly, a deep sense of anxiety among Church leaders in these dioceses. The public perception of this is that the message or mission of Christianity must be *placed next to* popular protests, even when they are violent, for foundational ideas to be heard.

For those concerned about the Church’s turn towards ultra-progressivism, what will frustrate them the most about this report is the extent to which the Church’s response was determined in the immediate aftermath of events like George Floyd’s death and the tearing down of the Colston statue in Bristol. From this perspective it is clear that the Church was, in many cases, responding to protests in an attempt to ‘keep up’ with what appeared as fashionable at the time.

In a period of flux in which the purpose and existence of institutions are thrown into narratives determined by a small minority of ultra-progressive activists, it is vitally important that the Church, among all institutions, is recognised and defended for the contribution it still makes to Britain. In that light, some response must be given to leaders including, for example, government minister Kemi Badendoch and the authors of the recent Commission on Race and Ethnic

Disparities (CRED) report to make a case for reason, mutual understanding and embracing our common humanity, against radical, ultra-progressive sentiments, deeply politicized identities combined with broadly unevidenced statements. The CRED Report was damned by the racial justice lobby for daring to present a positive message of a more coherent society (with supporting evidence), alert to the progress Britain has made in race relations. That such institutions like the Church still intend to pursue a divisive narrative of identity politics shows that more will have to be done to turn the tide away from ultra-progressivism.

In the words of Kemi Badendoch, the authors of the CRED report were 'all united in their desire to make this country a better place'.¹⁰ Those interested in defending the existence of British institutions need to make their arguments from a similar vantage point. In this period of extreme flux and uncertainty it is important to recognise that arguments cannot rely anymore simply on tradition or the timeless existence of such institutions, but need to be promoted and supported with a liberal and positive case for Britain.

Understanding 'white supremacy' and 'systemic racism'

In the immediate response to the Black Lives Matter protests across the United States, the Archbishop of Canterbury was quick to denounce the 'ongoing evil of white supremacy' across the world, saying that 'systemic racism' continues to cause 'incalculable harm across the world'.¹¹ And as has happened with many aspects of the Black Lives Matter protests, this perception of America as defined by its 'original sin' was quickly associated with Britain's past as well. Justin Welby went on to say later, in response to the vandalism associated with statues in the UK, that

the Church too would have to evaluate its monuments, suggesting that ‘some will have to come down’.¹² This historical revisionism, better understood as a colonisation of the past with contemporary interests, was shown not to be a narrative only for vandals but for the leading clergy in the Church of England. Altogether, the Black Lives Matter protests marked a significant moment in the perception and ideas the Church held for ultra-progressivism.

But it is important to remember that some of these ideas and perceptions of the world and race relations from Justin Welby had preceded the Black Lives Matter protests of last summer. For example, in February 2020, the General Synod of the Church of England unanimously approved a motion on the legacy of the Empire Windrush. During that debate the Archbishop of Canterbury said:

*‘I am sorry and ashamed... I’m ashamed of our history and I’m ashamed of our failure. There is no doubt when we look at our own Church that we are still deeply institutionally racist. I said it to the College of Bishops a couple of years ago and it’s [still] true’.*¹³

Nor is Justin Welby alone in this view. As the first chapter in this report shows, local clergymen in dozens of areas across the country have pronounced similar views on what ‘institutional racism’, ‘white supremacy’ and the seemingly-continuous evil of racism says about contemporary Britain.

We found:

- *Over 80 per cent of all church Dioceses (83 per cent) appoint clergy who have promoted racial justice activist claims and/or expressed concerns for institutional or systemic racism.*
- *Well over eight in ten (87.2 per cent) clergy-based racial justice activist claims – including the alleging of systemic or institutional racism – occurred within the first six months of*

the UK racial justice campaigns in May 2020, following the national BLM protests in the United States.

For example, one clergyman described the public sentiment for Captain Tom Moore's death during the Covid-19 pandemic as a 'cult of White British nationalism',¹⁴ although later apologised. Revd Dr Anderson Jeremiah, one author of the 'Lament to Action' report, described Christianity as a belief that is 'impossible to understand without the history of colonialism'.¹⁵ In these cases, it is hard to escape the view that certain members of the clergy and people in positions of authority in the Church have a distaste for Britain's shared inheritance. But it should also be clear at this point that these views are not reflective of just a certain number of individuals inside the Church – rather, as the chapter on systemic racism shows, it is an increasingly visible sentiment across local dioceses.

These ideas associated with ultra-progressivism can be criticised on their own terms. To begin, the term 'institutional racism' is a highly problematic concept which, at best, cannot be defined or at worse is purposely misleading. In the Government's Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities (CRED) report¹⁶ it is made clear that the terms 'institutional racism' or 'systemic racism' are not helpful and do not reflect what life in modern Britain is like. According to the Commission, 'the linguistic inflation on racism is confusing', and terms such as 'institutional racism' and 'systemic racism' are simply 'adding to the problem' of a disparity in perception rather than reality. The report says that we cannot afford for racism to become a term which is 'misunderstood or trivialised' as it is resulting in 'accusations of racism that are harder to prove, open to interpretation, or even vexatious'.

The lesson from the Commission's report was that we should reject the impulsive remarks a small but vocal group of anti-racism activists make about Britain. What is remarkable, and is the object of this report, is how these ideas and sentiments have persuaded leaders of national institutions, such as the Archbishop and the many clergymen and women across the Church, to accept these conclusions without question or proper scrutiny. The disconnect between leading clergy and the rest of the country on the views of 'systemic racism' in society and the wider ideas connected to it shows not only how distant many of the clergy remain on race equality in Britain, but also the Church's distance from a country that is no longer largely associated with it.

Unconscious Bias Training

Unconscious Bias Training¹⁷ (UBT) is better understood for what it represents than what it does. It claims it can unpack the inner workings of an individual's consciousness and thought processes in order to discover whether or not such a person has a preference for a particular group. Its association with ultra-progressivism is clear. Critical Race Theory (CRT) holds that 'racism is an ordinary rather than abnormal experience, supported by societal structures...'.¹⁸ It views concepts such as 'colour blindness' as 'only [rectifying] the most overt forms of racism while maintaining structural inequalities'. Moreover, it assumes white people as 'a collective group benefit from structural racism overall' and 'can be complicit (albeit unwittingly) in perpetuating racism'. The current government minister views aspects of such a theory as 'an ideology that sees my blackness as victimhood and their whiteness as oppression.'¹⁹ Early CRT research explored the changing attitudes to race and the interplay between racism and power. It works on assumptions a white-majority

society would be unlikely to cede its power voluntarily. As Joanna Williams has argued, terms like systemic racism, unconscious bias, white privilege, cultural appropriation, reparations, microaggressions and intersectionality have subsequently migrated from academics and activists to newspapers, radio discussions, charity campaigns and school lessons.²⁰ CRT holds race to be a social construct which has profound significance and shapes every aspect of our lives. The underlying assumption appears to be that:

*'Racism is understood as systemic; that is, built into the very fabric of societies designed by white people, for the benefit of white people. Proponents of CRT argue that ideas of white supremacy and black inferiority are intrinsic to our language, culture and interpretations of history.'*²¹

This conflict, it is believed, is inevitable and perpetual. UBT intervenes in this conflict as a third-party scientist who is perceived to be 'above' or distant from this conflict and therefore capable of resolving the tensions that will inevitably arise between these two groups in an impartial manner. Hence, diversity trainers use UBT to show that an individual has a particular preference for a certain group dependent on their skin colour. Diversity training today seems to be driven by the assumption that people have implicit attitudes or 'unconscious biases.'²²

Not surprisingly, the effectiveness of UBT has been questioned for its ability to actually do anything about our unconscious. It has been dismissed by a Government Equalities Office-commissioned report which said last year that 'there is currently no evidence that this training changes behaviour in the long term or improves workplace equality...'.²³ In other terms, the former boss of KPMG also questioned its effectiveness.²⁴

Yet, UBT is another ritual of ultra-progressivism that has seeped into the life of the Church of England. As the second chapter shows, it has been adopted by the Church since at least 2016, and in December it announced it would be using unconscious bias training to ensure that half of its leaders were female by 2030. This chapter also records its usage in local dioceses. In Chelmsford, for example, it was said precisely by one representative of the Church that UBT could ‘benefit the church’ through ‘radical inclusion’.²⁵ It has also been reported in London that a local churchman said UBT could increase participation rates by making it a ‘place where all are appreciated.’²⁶

- *In total we find over a quarter of all Dioceses (11 of 42) appoint clergy who appear very supportive of using unconscious bias training within the Church.*

A theme throughout this report is the growing perception inside the Church that by adopting ultra-progressive views or applications such as UBT it will have a greater reach with people and therefore increase participation rates. But this focus on ‘radical inclusion’ risks leading the Church towards a different path in which its main preoccupation is with HR managers, ‘diversity officers’ or extending anti-racism bureaucracy rather than fulfilling its real purpose as a place of worship.

Beware of the ‘Climate Emergency’?

The third strand of this report looks at the way in which the Church has adopted the notion of a ‘climate emergency’. This is the idea that unless immediate and drastic action is taken now to reduce global emissions then nothing short of a crisis will come about. This is how the United Nations describes the ‘Climate Crisis’:

*'No corner of the globe is immune from the devastating consequences of climate change. Rising temperatures are fuelling environmental degradation, natural disasters, weather extremes, food and water insecurity, economic disruption, conflict, and terrorism... as the infinite cost of climate change reaches irreversible highs, now is the time for bold collective action.'*²⁷

This is just one of many climate alarmist views. It is a catastrophic view of the natural world which holds human beings in contempt for their role as polluters of the planet. It is incompatible with the idea that people are fallen but capable of being redeemed or forgiven.

Almost revolutionary in its ambitions, this alarmist notion of a 'climate emergency' signifies a drastic shift across UK state institutions, including across the Church of England, well beyond a policy of care for our environment. The Church had previously been fiercely active in its support for the environment such as, for example, in 2005, the General Synod agreeing on the need for Church-wide action on climate change issues following the 'Sharing God's Planet' report.²⁸ In recent years, however, the climate change agenda – presented as an 'emergency', without question and in the absence of debate or evidence – appears to have taken a more pressing, if not zealous, focus for the Church. The Archbishop of Canterbury proclaims, 'The situation we find ourselves in has rightly been called a climate emergency.'

The Church seems keen to present itself as an ally of this ultra-progressive worldview. But the evidence suggesting a 'climate emergency' has in fact been poorly interpreted and evidenced. What of natural as well as anthropogenic factors that cause warming?²⁹ 'Emergency' is not reflected by geological records showing the climate has varied for as long as the planet has existed. As the world has warmed significantly less than previously expected, could it be

that our understanding of climate change is not complete enough? Climate policy relies on inadequate modelling but such models are not plausible as policy tools.³⁰ There is a lack of evidence that global warming is intensifying hurricanes, floods and droughts or increasing their frequency. Moreover, over the past century, there has been a sharp decrease in climate-related deaths due to adaptation.³¹ The depiction of policy challenges as ‘emergencies’ has tended only to produce knee-jerk, harmful and wholly unrealistic net-zero policies, without expressing a genuine care for Britain’s environment.

Nevertheless, our chapter on climate activism shows that institutions throughout the Church’s hierarchy have adopted this ultra-progressive view without question. We found:

- *Over 70 per cent of all Dioceses (71 per cent) appoint clergy who promote climate activist warnings and/or calls for recognition of the ‘climate emergency’.*
- *Over half of all declarations (55.85 per cent) from the clergy promoting climate activist warnings and recognition of the ‘climate emergency’ occurred within 12 months after the ‘Holy Week’ support for the climate protests in April 2019.*

At the top, for instance, the Church has produced reports on the catastrophic effects – as well as perceived missional opportunities – of the climate emergency, and the Archbishop of Canterbury launched last year a vegan version of Easter, which was called the ‘Green Lent Campaign’.³² Similar campaigns or associations have also been established in dioceses across the country. However, the Church must realise that the more it adopts or accepts this circular ideology and alarmist campaign the more it will lose focus on what it really exists for.

What has happened to the Church of England in the past year reflects the direction other British institutions are currently travelling towards. As institutions have declined in their authority, there is increasing anxiety within them to be justified. This decline has run in tandem with a wider vacation of public life, meaning only a small number of activists are providing a path in defining the role and purpose of such institutions. Thus, ideologically, institutions like the Church are increasingly taking on the mantras of ultra-progressivism, such as the notion of 'systemic racism' or alarmist calls for a 'climate emergency'. These ideas are reinforced by new policies to achieve structural change via a growing bureaucracy, recruitment shortlists or quotas and rewriting education curriculums. That has, in turn, impacted the spirit and motive of the Church's mission.

1.

Church depictions of English society as suffering ‘systemic racism’

- *Over 80 per cent of all church Dioceses (83 per cent) appoint clergy who have promoted racial justice activist claims and/or expressed concerns for institutional or systemic racism.*
- *Well over eight in ten (87.2 per cent) clergy-based racial justice activist claims – including the alleging of systemic or institutional racism – occurred within the first six months of the UK racial justice campaigns in May 2020, following the national BLM protests in the United States.*

A truly horrifying death caught on video footage in the US in May 2020 sparked protests all over America, which then spread to the UK. The US saw protests over the death of an African-American man in police custody: George Floyd died after being arrested by police in Minneapolis, Minnesota, with the footage depicting a white police officer kneeling on Mr Floyd’s neck while he was pinned to the floor.³³ That police officer was later convicted of the murder of George Floyd.

Multiple groups across the UK reacted strongly to the killing of George Floyd.³⁴ Many hundreds of people attended protests across England organised by the campaign

group Black Lives Matter (BLM) – mostly peaceful but some violent – in a series of anti-racism demonstrations during those weeks and months that followed.³⁵ It is an event which subsequently sparked a national debate over Britain's history. The Black Lives Matter (UK) campaign is at the forefront of the UK national debate, with its website targeted at the 'black lives matter revolutionary', urging '... action must be taken to dismantle systemic racism' and to seek a 'new order that eradicates systemic and systematic racism in our society, exposing, stripping and cleansing the racist mindset of individuals and societies...'.³⁶

Within the Church, an early statement from the Archbishops of Canterbury (Justin Welby) and York (John Sentamu) in response to events in the United States of America on 2 June claimed events had drawn public attention to 'the ongoing evil of white supremacy'.³⁷ In their view, 'Systemic racism' continued to cause 'incalculable harm across the world', which presumably implied harm across England. As with other statements, it considered racism to be an affront to God. In that message, without pointing to evidence of where that racism was taking place or in relation to what treatment, they considered it their role 'to eliminate this scourge on humanity.'

After several BLM protests had ignited campaigns to remove statues, monuments or other commemorations which were historically linked to the slave trade, including some historic churches, the Church of England's Director of Cathedrals and Church Buildings acknowledged:

*'It is not possible to provide a single position which could apply to all circumstances and which would satisfy all legitimate viewpoints, however we acknowledge the real and justified anger of those who believe monuments in churches and elsewhere should be reviewed.'*³⁸

The Church authorities pledged action was being taken by parishes and cathedrals across England to consider monuments which have links to slave trading or the exploitation of people.³⁹ By October 2020, a Taskforce had been set up – as a response to ‘the Black Lives Matter movement pushing racial justice right up the agenda’⁴⁰ – in order to make changes to ensure greater racial equality in the Church of England got under way.

The sense of ultra-vigilance grew deeper as the Archbishop of Canterbury and many others began reconciling support to ‘Take action for climate justice to show #blacklivesmatter’.⁴¹ The Archbishop of Canterbury, together with the Bishops of Salisbury, Oxford, Truro, Dover, Woolwich, Sherborne, Loughborough, Kingston, Reading and Ramsbury, and former Archbishop Rowan Williams, joined a long list of archbishops and bishops worldwide in signing an open letter stating that black lives are predominantly affected by the effects of climate change, as well as police brutality and of Covid-19.⁴² Campaigning against, ‘Environmental Racism’, their focus had been on how it was predominantly black lives that are being impacted by drought, flooding, storms and sea level rise and the delayed response to climate injustice gave the impression that *#blacklivesdontmatter*.⁴³ The change was predicated, however, on a wholesale acceptance of unchallenged viewpoints derived from politicised campaigns; that view was presented as uncontested.

Since then, the Church has said ‘the time for lament at such treatment is over and that the time for action has now come’.⁴⁴ There were no decisions to be made; the time for action was upon us. Further still, one member of the clergy controversially stated, ‘The cult of Captain Tom is a cult of white British nationalism.’ The Church’s subsequent Anti-Racism Taskforce created by the Archbishops of Canterbury

and York in the autumn of 2020, and which reported in April 2021, remained steadfast in its ‘recognition of the continuing impact of institutional racism both within society and the church’.⁴⁵ It was not necessarily a wholly new view to the Church, with the Archbishop of Canterbury previously saying:

‘I am sorry and ashamed I’m ashamed of our history and I’m ashamed of our failure. There is no doubt when we look at our own Church that we are still deeply institutionally racist. I said it to the College of Bishops a couple of years ago and it’s [still] true.’⁴⁶

In order to understand the Church’s self-recognition as ‘deeply institutionally racist’, it is important to draw the distinction between the Church’s support for racial equality and the assumption that British society – and the Church of England – is institutionally or systemically racist. Or, that knee-jerk policies need to then be put in place across every area of policy, even where evidence has not been presented to explain real or imagined disparities in society.

The sense of imbalance in the Church’s terminology and approach to what it calls ‘systemic racism’ is made clear by a recent government-commissioned report. The Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities’ report in March 2021⁴⁷ has been directly critical of the use of the terms ‘institutional’ and ‘systemic’ racism – both of which the Commission claimed there was no evidence to support their existence in the UK. According to the Commission, ‘[t]he linguistic inflation on racism is confusing,’ and terms such as ‘institutional racism’ and ‘systemic racism’ are simply ‘adding to the problem.’

Their report held that we cannot afford for racism to become a term which is ‘misunderstood or trivialised’ as it is resulting in ‘accusations of racism that are harder to prove, open to interpretation, or even vexatious.’ Consequently,

the Commission states it is now becoming ‘possible for any act...to be classified as racist’, and so clearer definitions are needed to make measuring the true extent of racism simpler.⁴⁸

In regard to institutional racism, the Commission say they are especially concerned with the term because of its ‘evolving definitions’ between the Scarman Report in 1981 and the Macpherson report of 1999. The Commission suggest that if the term is used today, it should be limited – not ‘a general catch-all phrase for any microaggression’ – because it is now ‘liberally used, and often to describe any circumstances in which differences in outcomes between racial and ethnic groups exist in an institution, without evidence to support such claims.’ They argue that ‘[w]here “institutional racism” is used too casually as an explanatory tool, it can also lead to insufficient consideration of other factors which are also known to drive such differences in outcomes.’⁴⁹

Yet, the Church’s guidance under the Archbishop offers no such balanced assessment. An article in *The Critic* by Michael Collins states that ‘[u]nder the aegis of the current Archbishop of Canterbury, the Anglican church has gone from the Liberal Democrats at prayer to a protest movement for campus causes.’⁵⁰ Collins points out that Sunday sermons are now citing ‘systemic racism’ and quoting Eddo-Lodge [author of ‘Why I’m no longer talking to White people about race’], bishops are ‘taking the knee’ in solidarity with the BLM movement, seminars are being planned on racism, and events are being organised which support BLM. He attributes this to those within the Church ‘[t]aking their cue’ from the Archbishop of Canterbury on causes like BLM, even though, according to Collins, ‘the movement’s ideology is at odds with much of what the Anglican church

holds dear.' Collins himself even admits to considering leaving the Church 'as it's begun to parody the liberalism it embraced.' He proclaims: 'we won't be kneeling and we won't be repenting, despite the prayers of the Archbishop of Canterbury.'

Despite discredited and unevidenced statements being made to justify claims to 'systemic racism', clergy have 'taken the knee'⁵¹ and continually asserted at different stages that 'we have been faced with the ongoing racism in much of our culture and institutions',⁵² of 'the evil of systemic racism entrenched in our society';^{53 54} that 'Black and brown skinned people have endured decades of injustices';⁵⁵ that 'black lives are systemically devalued by society, through institutionally racist systems and structures';⁵⁶ that 'there should be an outpouring of outrage in our communities';⁵⁷ that '[w]e pray that we might uproot its cancerous and systemic hold on our own institutions';⁵⁸ that 'the slow response of the world to this problem gives the impression that black lives don't matter';⁵⁹ that we face 'the continuing entrenched racism within our midst as a church and a nation';⁶⁰ that '[r]acial justice is not just a black or white issue; it is a Kingdom of God issue';⁶¹ and that '[r]epentance, a change of mind and heart that leads to a change of action, is required'.⁶²

As might be expected, the message and work of Jesus has often provided some parallel with the role of BLM campaigns. A hymn was sung 'as a song of lament for all black sons and daughters who have been harmed and vilified by the justice system'.⁶³ Further statements called for us to address 'our own unconscious biases that lead us to discriminate against others',⁶⁴ to make commitments as 'evidence that we are doing something to make this apology real and meaningful',⁶⁵ while confessing that the Church

'has been grappling with its own history of systemic and structural racism for over 30 years'.⁶⁶ One diocese joined in the 'Blackout Tuesday' initiative on social media by sharing a black square as a way to show their solidarity with the BLM movement.⁶⁷ Other statements showed 'Christians oppose fascism – along with racism, nationalism and white supremacism because it is a denial of the truth revealed in Scripture'⁶⁸ and clergy were '...more convinced than ever that racism, within church and society, continues to be deeply rooted in individuals and institutions, in our attitudes and our practices.'⁶⁹ They called on the 'congregation to continue to pray for all those who are affected by the systemic and blatant racism in the UK'.⁷⁰

In order to investigate the scale of support for racial justice agendas within the Church of England, the following analysis looks into the reported instances of clergy involvement in those recent campaigns across the dioceses. By observing and recording the involvement of the appointed Bishops, vicars, Rectors, ministers or other clergy in racial justice campaigns – particularly since the rise of the BLM campaign – some measure can be made of the clergy-adopted progressivist values within each diocese. By measuring the reported instances, articles, statements and reports on systemic racism in the Church and Church-affiliated websites, and across media outlets relating to each diocese, it is much easier to observe how the leadership and clergy within the various regional dioceses are approaching the adoption of radical progressive agendas.

Bath and Wells

- In Black History Month, a local reverend had devoted prayer for the BLM movement. More significantly, the Dean and Chapter of Wells, together with the Bishops of

Bath and Wells, and of Taunton, 'took the knee' soon after in the Nave of Wells Cathedral.⁷¹ They did so in explicit solidarity with the BLM campaign. And the cathedral also pledged to offer a series of talks and seminars on racism. The Dean of Wells said at the time: 'We wanted to give the clearest possible signal of our rejection of racism and our support for the Black Lives Matter campaign.'

- Early on during the protests, the commitment to the BLM campaign was overshadowed by Church of England bishops being accused of 'utter hypocrisy' for publicly supporting the BLM movement while failing to address racism in their dioceses.⁷² Two men from black and minority ethnic backgrounds – a vicar and a trainee priest – claimed discrimination blocked their efforts to advance within the Church hierarchy. Both men explained they were angry that Church of England leaders had voiced support for the BLM protests while failing to act on systemic discrimination against black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) people within the Church.⁷³

During the episode, the Bishop intervened to write to clergy in the diocese at the peak of the BLM demonstrations, given that the *Guardian* printed a story on the Rt Revd involved. In the letter, the Bishop sets out:

*'In this diocese, as in the Church of England as a whole, there is so much we have to do to address institutional racism. We have failed in the past and it is clear we are still failing now. We pledge ourselves to both listen and act to address racism and inequality in our diocesan structures and our church communities and we commit ourselves now to drawing up a timetable for action and sharing it with you.'*⁷⁴

The letter also confirms that it had been agreed that the retired Bishop would relinquish the post of honorary

assistant bishop in this diocese with immediate effect and would withdraw from all public ministry while the appeal into the case against him was heard.

The retired bishop involved was later formally rebuked by the Church of England for racially stereotyping a clergyman.⁷⁵ The rebuke followed an earlier episode in which the vicar had described his ‘absolute devastation’ at finding a letter about him containing racial stereotypes. The Archbishop of York imposed the rebuke on the retired Bishop, and he was also told to undergo unconscious racial bias training.⁷⁶

- Talks were also organised via the Church on the topics addressing BLM, that ‘God is not a white man: rethinking white supremacy in the Church’ and on ‘What does justice look like in a time of Black Lives Matter?’ A series of ‘Black Lives Matter Talks’ were then set up throughout July and August 2020 at Wells Cathedral to address the issue of racism.⁷⁷ The Rt Revd Rose Hudson Wilkin, Bishop of Dover, spoke on ‘Protesting During the Pandemic’. The Rt. Revd. Alastair Redfern, Hon. Assistant Bishop in both Salisbury and Bath and Wells dioceses, spoke on ‘The Gospel, Slavery and Black Lives Matter’. Chine McDonal, the Head of Community Fundraising & Public Engagement at Christian Aid, spoke on ‘God is not a white man: rethinking white supremacy in the Church’. Richard Reddie, Director of Justice and Inclusion at Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI), spoke on ‘What does justice look like in a time of Black Lives Matter?’

Birmingham

- In the Birmingham Diocese, a ‘reflective walk’ was held at St Germain’s church grounds entitled ‘Black Lives Matter:

Act of Solidarity This Sunday'.⁷⁸ The event was presented as '...an opportunity to stand with sisters and brothers in their grief, anger and pain by passing through the site and participating in reflection, prayer, and symbolic action.' Guests were then invited to reflect on what George Floyd's murder 'tells us about ourselves and the society we are creating around us.' They were also then invited to 'tie ribbon to the hedge as a symbol of our unity.'

- There was a desire for parishioners to commit to a statement of intent to bring about change in the Church. A group of Birmingham Christian leaders had generated significant online meetings to discuss the matters raised by the BLM protests; they came together under the title 'Time4Change' to 'reflect the group's declared intention to see real and lasting change.'⁷⁹ The Time4Change leaders thought that the Christian Church 'has to be strong in the struggle against racial discrimination', and that the Church 'has to ensure that its own house is in order, if it is to give a lead in wider society.' By 'removing all racial discrimination from the Christian Church', they could take that 'vital step' on the journey to 'greater unity in the Body of Christ.' They called for all parish Christians to 'commit to a statement of intent to bring about change in the Church in Birmingham/Solihull – and in society at large.' It was hosted by leading Bishops and Pastors.

Blackburn

- Ongoing racism was said to exist in much of our culture and institutions. In a video message for the Diocese of Blackburn at the end of July, the Bishop of Blackburn set out that 'During the pandemic we have been faced with the ongoing racism in much of our culture and institutions.'⁸⁰

- The senior clergy committed to a statement recognising ‘the evil of systemic racism entrenched in our society’. A June statement from the senior clergy of Blackburn Diocese gathered behind the statement made by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York on ‘the evil of systemic racism entrenched in our society’, which exists here in the UK. It was signed by the Bishops of Blackburn, of Burnley, of Lancaster, the Archdeacon of Blackburn and the Archdeacon of Lancaster.⁸¹

Bristol

- Stained glass windows dedicated to Edward Colston were removed from Bristol Cathedral. The Bishop of Bristol spoke of the windows being removed as a ‘symbolic moment’ for the city.⁸²
- The statement from the Bishop of Bristol followed the day of protest in Bristol and the destruction of the statue of Edward Colston, which the Bishop said marked ‘a moment in the city’s history’.⁸³ The Bishop claimed she ‘will now act with a renewed sense of urgency and determination’ to ‘acknowledge and repent of the Church’s past involvement in and benefit from the slave trade.’ The statement sought to ‘challenge and address institutional racism’, as well as recruiting and supporting more BAME clergy, staff and volunteers. It commented on the ‘need for profound cultural change in our Church.’ And it pledged to be relentless in the Church’s commitment to bringing about change.
- A vicar who was subsequently hired to the position of Bishop’s Advisor on Racial Justice in Bristol set out her own personal response on the Diocese website.⁸⁴ In that statement, the vicar sets out that ‘Black and brown skinned people have endured decades of injustices.’

Providing a narrative involving the deaths of Stephen Lawrence, Mark Duggan, ‘countless others’, the Grenfell Tower disaster, the Windrush scandal, an increase in knife crimes among black youths, and the higher impact of Covid-19 deaths on key workers from BAME backgrounds, the vicar asks how many black and brown lives have to be lost before we work together ‘to see a real change’ in society? The response seeks for the Church ‘to examine its own systems, structures and leadership.’

In that above statement,⁸⁵ Jesus’ work is provided with some parallel with the role of BLM. The vicar sees black lives as being systemically devalued by society, through ‘institutionally racist systems and structures’. As with several other Church of England narratives, it draws an alignment between Jesus’ work and the ongoing role of BLM: ‘Throughout Jesus’ earthly ministry, we observe that Jesus came to be a voice for the voiceless and to transform the lives of the oppressed and wounded – as Christians we know that every life matters, deeply. And thus, black lives must matter too!’ Again, ‘When Christians stand together to say “Black Lives Matter”, we offer a Christ-model that teaches we are all made in the image of God.’

The above statement also sets out how ‘black lives are systemically devalued by society, through institutionally racist systems and structures...’⁸⁶ For that reason, ‘there should be an outpouring of outrage in our communities.’ It calls on parishioners to pray ‘against the unjust structures and systems which impact people of colour adversely’, while calling upon us to be honest about our unconscious biases and ‘a future where black and brown skinned people feel safe and valued in society’.

- There was a desire to move quickly to appoint a Bishop's Advisor for Racial Justice and embed unconscious bias training.⁸⁷
- A sermon given by the Chaplain to the Bishop of Bristol for Racial Justice Sunday on 14 February 2021 at Bristol Cathedral talked about institutional racism in the Church of England. He described it as 'a failing of the Church'.⁸⁸ It then sets out how he had 'become more aware of the whiteness of power and its implications'. He referred to the effects of and the legacy of racism in the city of Bristol, saying the city was 'implicated in it – more than most – through the historic transatlantic traffic in enslaved African people, which to this day is evident in our buildings and our monuments, including in this Cathedral, and in the wealth of the city.' The toppling of the Colston statue and the BLM protests he felt had generated 'a new momentum in the city' to address 'historic racism'.

Canterbury

- During an interview with the *BBC Today Programme*, Justin Welby, the Archbishop of Canterbury, was asked, in the light of the BLM protests following the death of George Floyd, if he thought the western Church's portrayal of Jesus should be 'thought about again' and 're-imagined'. He responded that it does, pointing out that churches across the world portrayed Jesus differently, such as seeing a Middle Eastern rather than a white Jesus – which he noted was 'the most accurate' portrayal.

The Archbishop also discussed the calls for the removal of monuments with links to the UK's imperialist history and slave trade. He said that the statues in Canterbury

Cathedral would be ‘looked at very carefully’ to determine if they should all be there.⁸⁹

- Speaking at an event in London in front of the Church of England’s General Synod, the Archbishop of Canterbury expressed his personal shame of racism present within the Church, telling the audience that ‘[t]here is no doubt when we look at our own church that we are still deeply institutionally racist.’ He called for ‘radical and decisive’ progress to put an end to institutional racism, and added that the Church must change from a ‘hostile environment’ to a ‘hospitable, welcoming one’.⁹⁰
- For Racial Justice Sunday 2021, the Archbishop of Canterbury co-wrote a prayer with Dr Sanjee Perera, the Archbishops’ adviser on minority ethnic Anglican concerns. The content of the prayer refers to ‘the sin of racism’ – with lines including: ‘We pray for all those affected by the marginalisation of prejudice and the violence of racist words and actions’ and ‘[w]e pray that we might uproot its cancerous and systemic hold on our own institutions.’⁹¹
- On 13 June 2020, Rt Revd Rose Hudson-Wilkin, the Bishop of Dover, addressed a BLM march taking place in Canterbury. She addressed the crowd outside Canterbury Cathedral and was accompanied by the Dean of Canterbury, Very Revd Dr Robert Willis, and the Archdeacon of Canterbury, Ven Jo Kelly-Moore.

In her speech, Bishop Rose urged the crowd to act ‘peacefully’ as well as cooperatively in the face of injustice, saying: ‘[l]et’s together, in harmony, make the change that needs to happen.’ She also spoke of the death of George Floyd and wanting to ‘live in a world where all

lives matter,’ which she said would not happen ‘until we accept the right for black people to be free.’ In agreement with the protestors in the crowd, she also called racism a ‘pandemic’ itself.⁹²

- The Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Dover were amongst 11 Archbishops and 60 bishops who signed a statement by the Anglican Communion Environmental Network on environmental racism. They claim that the disproportionate impact of climate change on black people and the slow response of the world to this problem gives the impression that black lives don’t matter.⁹³
- In a joint statement with the Archbishop of York on 2 June 2020, the Archbishop of Canterbury responded to the recent events in America. The two Archbishops said that the events once again showed ‘the ongoing evil of white supremacy’. They talked of the systemic racism which causes ‘incalculable harm across the world’ and highlighted that ‘racism is an affront to God. It is born out of ignorance, and must be eradicated.’⁹⁴

Chelmsford

- On 2 June 2020, St James’s Parish in the Diocese of Chelmsford published a statement on their website: ‘Black lives matter... to us, here, at St James’s’, following the death of George Floyd. In the statement, the parish pointed out the importance of still caring about the issue despite the fact the killing happened in America; the overrepresentation of BAME citizens in stop and search statistics in the UK; the ‘disproportionately small number’ of BAME clergy in the Church; the different ways in which people can help, such as praying; and, finally, the importance of Christians speaking up on what

some may view as just a ‘political’ issue which should not be discussed in order to remain ‘polite’ because when you ‘take a look at those pictures of brutality, poverty, violence and discrimination that stream into our homes from across the world on a daily basis and tell me – has the time for being polite passed?’⁹⁵

- On 3 June 2020, Revd Ade Eleyae (Equalities Advisor to the Bishop of Chelmsford), Revd Canon Dr Chigor Chike (Chair of the Chelmsford Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns) and Rt Revd Peter Hill (Acting Bishop of Chelmsford) released a statement following the events in America. In the statement, they echoed the statement made by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York on the previous day. They said they were ‘particularly conscious of systemic racism which can often hide within structures,’ including the Church, and that ‘[w]e must all play our part in eradicating all forms of racism wherever it persists’.⁹⁶
- Revd Canon Dr Chigor Chike was appointed as the Church of England’s interim National Adviser Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns. Rt Revd Peter Hill, the acting Bishop of Chelmsford and the Bishop of Barking, commented on Revd Chigor’s appointment, saying ‘Chigor takes up this national role at a key moment in our response to the continuing entrenched racism within our midst as a church and a nation.’⁹⁷

Chester

- A group of Christian leaders in Chester, including the Acting Bishop of Chester, the Dean of Chester, and the Archdeacon of Chester, released a statement saying: ‘As

Christian leaders in Chester we know that silence is no longer an option: Black Lives Matter.’ In the statement they point out that ‘[r]acial justice is not just a black or white issue; it is a Kingdom of God issue’, and apologise for the ‘embedded’ racism within the institution of the Church of England.⁹⁸

- After being appointed as the Bishop of Chester, Mark Tanner spoke to BBC Radio Merseyside. When asked what his priorities as Bishop would be, he said that he wanted the Church to keep looking ‘outward and loving and serving people’ because, in regards to BLM, Bishop Mark claimed the Church of England has ‘not always been as good at promoting people who are UK minority ethnic or minority ethnic from any background,’ and so it was not only important for those people to ‘find themselves at home in church but to be able to serve in all the roles we have in Church.’⁹⁹
- Following the death of George Floyd, the Diocese of Chester announced that it would host an event called ‘Who is your neighbour?’ in which a series of conversations would be held with members of the black and minority ethnic communities in the diocese to see what can be done to tackle issues of race and equality.¹⁰⁰
- Revd Canon Lameck Mutete, Vicar of Tattenhall, produced a short video which reflected on the death of George Floyd in America. In the video, Revd Lameck said that ‘black lives, like any other lives, do matter,’ and that ‘[a]s Christians, we are committed to playing our part in seeing racism eradicated and the restoration of justice for all.’¹⁰¹

Coventry

- To mark two weeks since the death of George Floyd, the Bishop of Coventry (alongside the Bishop of Warwick) 'took the knee' for eight minutes and 46 seconds – the length of time a police officer knelt on George Floyd's neck – in the ruins of Coventry Cathedral.¹⁰²
- In response to the death of George Floyd, Bishop John and Revd Dr Rosalyn Murphy discussed the issues of racism, power and privilege with each other. Revd Rosalyn also recited the poem 'I Cannot Breathe' by Oyin Oladipo during their talk.¹⁰³

Durham

- On 10 June 2020, the Bishop of Durham wrote a reflection on the death of George Floyd and the subsequent BLM protests for *The Northern Echo*. In his reflection, the Bishop speaks of living a life of privilege, and notes that on his journey to where he is now, he has discovered 'the depths of racism in our nation.' He goes on to discuss this further, saying that '[s]tructural racism remains' and that, personally, he still has 'to repent regularly of thoughts and feelings of racial superiority.'

The Bishop states that he decided to write the reflection because he believes that:

'unless those of us who are white and privileged own up publicly to our inner faults and failings there is little hope that the current round of protests will prove any more effective for change than the too many that have gone before.'

For the situation to end, the Bishop says that protest will not be enough as '[r]epentance, a change of mind and heart that leads to a change of action, is required' – which

he points out must begin with himself and others ‘who are equally white and privileged.’¹⁰⁴

Ely

- After requests to learn more about why the BLM campaign is important, the Fordham and Quy Deanery decided to hold a series of Zoom sessions in order to reflect on race and racism in the Church and throughout society.¹⁰⁵
- In a letter from Bishop Stephen (the Bishop of Ely) to the diocese, he discusses the Covid-19 pandemic and how it has highlighted a ‘passionate call for racial justice’. He states that the Church is not ‘immune’ from the questions regarding race, saying that the Church can do much more ‘in terms of diversity and representation in ordained leadership, in our structures, boards and committees, and in the encouragement and nurture of vocations.’¹⁰⁶
- Dr Rowan Williams, Honorary Assistant Bishop, was amongst 11 Archbishops and 60 bishops who signed a statement by the Anglican Communion Environmental Network on environmental racism. They claim that the disproportionate impact of climate change on black people and the slow response of the world to this problem gives the impression that black lives don’t matter.¹⁰⁷

Europe

- Following the death of George Floyd and the subsequent BLM protests, the Diocese of Europe responded with a policy framework entitled ‘Breathing Life’ – ‘an invitation to engage with the embedded concept of belonging and need. It calls for a powerful compulsion to act.’¹⁰⁸

- The two BAME champions from the Diocese of Europe (Revd Augustine Nwaekwe and Revd Smitha Prasadam) discussed racial justice in an interview and made a range of suggestions regarding what the Church of England and the Diocese of Europe could do to support the BAME community. For instance, they suggested that the Church should: 'create an enabling environment for every person to flourish'; 'commit to finance'; not avoid discussions on racism; and 'root out racism and challenge custom and practice which favours one ethnicity over another.'¹⁰⁹

Exeter

- Bishop Robert Atwell, Bishop Nick McKinnel, Bishop Jackie Searle and Revd Tanya Hockley-Still from the Diocese of Exeter said they support the statement made by the Archbishops of York and Canterbury on 2 June and that they want 'churches to be at the forefront of creating a more just society, working with local government, charities and community groups to tackle socio-economic injustices'.¹¹⁰

Gloucester

- The Diocese of Gloucester created three podcasts on the topic of BLM with Bishop Rachel and members of the diocese. The podcasts discuss matters such as the murder of George Floyd, the failings of the Church regarding racial justice, and race, ethnicity and diversity within the Church.¹¹¹
- On 3 June 2020, Bishops Rachel and Robert from the Dioceses of Gloucester and Tewkesbury commended the statement made by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York on 2 June regarding racism. In their statement, the bishops said:

*'we need to look inside ourselves, our communities and the places of our lives to examine our own actions and inaction, our words and our behaviour, what we challenge and what we fail to challenge.'*¹¹²

Guildford

- In a message from Bishop Jo on 21 June 2020, she highlighted that 'it is vital that we acknowledge how Black Lives Matter – in our words, deeds and imagining.' She called the problem of racism 'individual and institutional', and asks those in the diocese to read, listen and lament, as well as to plan steps to take. At the end of the message, she proposes that members of the diocese should watch a video of Reni Eddo-Lodge talk about her book on racism and to take time on Windrush Day to 'lament, remembering the suffering of the Windrush Generation, and praying for a better, fairer world'.¹¹³
- Bishop Andrew Watson was amongst 11 Archbishops and 60 bishops who signed a statement by the Anglican Communion Environmental Network on environmental racism. They claim that the disproportionate impact of climate change on black people and the slow response of the world to this problem gives the impression that black lives don't matter.¹¹⁴

Hereford

- On the Diocese of Hereford website, it is stated that the BLM protests have shown the need to respond to the issue of racial injustice 'with love and compassion'. They note that the Church of England's record in the area 'is not good' and so propose a number of areas in which the diocese can begin to focus on, such as challenging and

addressing institutional racism, recruiting and supporting more BAME clergy/staff/volunteers, and acknowledging and repenting of the Church's past involvement in and benefit from the slave trade.¹¹⁵

- On 18 June 2020, as part of a weekly video message, Bishop Richard from the Diocese of Hereford spoke of the death of George Floyd and the protests and discussions which followed. In his message, Bishop Richard admits to 'racism within the church' and says that, to begin with, the Diocese of Hereford is doing two things to help combat racism: ensuring job adverts 'explicitly state that we welcome candidates from a black and ethnically minority background' and 'removing the front pages from application forms' so that candidates are not judged on gender or race.¹¹⁶

Leeds

- Fr Simon from St Mark's Church in the Diocese of Leeds wrote a letter regarding BLM. Within the letter, Fr Simon emphasises that 'black lives matter' and notes failings by the Church on the issue, acknowledging that 'various BAME clergy being turned down for positions because of "cultural differences"'. At the end of his letter, Fr Simon makes suggestions of how people can act moving forward: considering 'how the things in your shopping basket came to be there'; 'to use insurance companies, pensions and banks with good ethical policies'; and '[a]t the very least...to be asking the shops and investors questions.'¹¹⁷
- The Diocese of Leeds announced that on 13 September 2020 there would be a racial justice theme of special service across their cathedrals. They announced that the service would include: short addresses by Bishop Nick,

Bishop Tony Parry of the New Testament Church of God, and Professor Udy Archibong (Professor of Diversity at the University of Bradford); music such as ‘It Is Enough’ (‘a hymn used as a song of lament for all black sons and daughters who have been harmed and vilified by the justice system’); and the readings of prayers and biblical texts.¹¹⁸

Leicester

- On 8 June 2020, the Bishop of Leicester, Rt Revd Martyn Snow, ‘took the knee’ for eight minutes and 46 seconds to mark two weeks since the killing of George Floyd. Speaking on the issue, Bishop Martyn said:

‘I stand alongside those who are suffering and peacefully calling for urgent change, as well as committing to make changes in our own lives and the institutions we are part of. Structural and systemic racial prejudice exists across societies and institutions we must act to change that, as well as addressing our own unconscious biases that lead us to discriminate against others.’¹¹⁹

- A taskforce set up to ensure greater racial equality in the Church of England includes Revd Canon Lusa Nsenga-Ngoy – the BAME Mission and Ministry Enabler for the Diocese of Leicester. In a statement regarding the taskforce, Revd Lusa said that the aim was ‘to make the church a place where all of God’s children can be present and participating.’ He also pointed out that racism has been part of the lives of many Anglicans in the Church, and although ‘this is not the church’s first attempt to actively engage with the issue, it seems that there is a new resolve and commitment not only to call out racism, but to root it out of the life and structures of our church.’

He concluded by asking people to pray ‘that as a church we may take seriously the call to repentance from past and ongoing racism, and be deeply committed to the work of reconciliation through racial justice.’¹²⁰

- The General Synod of the Church of England voted unanimously for an amendment to apologise for racism within the Church – an amendment led by Bishop Martyn from the Diocese of Leicester.
- On 11 February 2020, Bishop Martyn spoke to the General Synod and apologised personally, as well as on the behalf of the Church of England, for the racism within the institution. During his speech to the Synod, Bishop Martyn spoke of the history of racism in the Church, referring to it as ‘an appalling stain’, but also acknowledged an acceptance was needed of the Church’s failings today in addressing racism and unconscious bias. He also spoke of ‘putting in place concrete, practical actions to change things’ to apologise to the BAME community within the Church, such as the Church now employing more BAME people – which he hoped was ‘evidence that we are doing something to make this apology real and meaningful.’¹²¹
- Revd Lusa Nsenga-Ngoy, a member of the Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns and diocesan BAME Mission and Ministry Enabler in Leicester, reflected on reality of racial justice in an interview with Churches Together in England.

When asked how the Church of England was seeking to address racial justice, Revd Lusa said that the Church ‘has been grappling with its own history of systemic and structural racism for over 30 years’ but that, despite some slow progress, the picture ‘remains bleak.’ He was then

asked about what more could be done by the Church to address racial injustice, and he said that many are 'calling for an independent public inquiry to investigate, as a matter of priority, issues of racism within Church and society.'¹²²

Lichfield

- The Bishop of Wolverhampton, Rt Revd Clive Gregory, spoke against plans for a plaque commemorating Enoch Powell in Wolverhampton. Bishop Clive said:

*'It is disingenuous to suggest that the conferring of a blue plaque on such a divisive figure would be a neutral act. It would be widely interpreted as honoring Enoch Powells racist views and would no doubt provide a focus for those who wish to exacerbate divisions within our communities and undermine the values that bind us together as fellow citizens.'*¹²³

- Bishop Clive also signed a petition by Black Country Stand Up To Racism alongside Rt Revd Dr Michael Ipgrave (the Bishop of Lichfield) to oppose the plaque.¹²⁴
- It was announced that on 13 October 2019 there would be a 'Walking Together' celebration for Black History Month at Lichfield Cathedral. The Bishop of Lichfield, Rt Revd Dr Michael Ipgrave, said that the walk would be 'an opportunity to give thanks to God for the many ways in which BAME Christians enrich the lives of our churches and communities', and that the diocese is committing itself to ensure 'that people of every background know that they have an honoured and assured place in the life of our Diocese.' Canon Andrew Stead of Lichfield Cathedral also commented on the event, saying that it is a privilege 'to be able to host and support this important occasion in the life of our diocese.'¹²⁵

- On Windrush Day in 2020, the Bishop of Lichfield wrote to all ministers across the diocese regarding the debt owed and the work that is still needed to tackle discrimination and racism. In his letter, Bishop Michael said the Church still has many challenges ‘to identify, address and overcome’ – particularly ‘in areas such as: recruitment of clergy; discernment of vocations; representation at every level of governance and leadership; educational provision; ecumenical partnerships’ in the diocese – which will require a ‘[s]ystemic change’.¹²⁶

Lincoln

- Revd Sonia Barron, Director of Ordinands and Vocations in the Diocese of Lincoln was chosen to co-chair the Church of England’s Anti-Racism Taskforce. The Taskforce made recommendations for what the Church can do to improve its record on racial justice and equality. Revd Sonia said she was ‘hopeful, given the commitment expressed by both our Archbishops, that progress on the issue of making the structures and systems in the Church of England more impartial will become a reality’.¹²⁷

London

- When Captain Sir Tom Moore died in February 2021 and Prime Minister Boris Johnson called for a ‘national clap in his honour’, Revd Jarel Robinson-Brown tweeted: ‘The cult of Captain Tom is a cult of white British nationalism. I will offer prayers for the repose of his kind and generous soul, but I will not be joining the ‘national clap’.’ After the tweet received backlash, it was deleted by Revd Robinson-Brown and he offered an ‘unreserved apology’ for the ‘insensitive timing and content’ of the tweet, as

well as adding he would read and sign the Church's digital charter.

However, the Diocese of London announced that they would be launching an investigation into the reverend – which would be led by the Archdeacon of London – calling his comments 'unacceptable, insensitive and ill-judged'.¹²⁸

- On 9 June 2020, the Diocese of London joined in the 'Blackout Tuesday' initiative on social media by sharing a black square as a way to show their solidarity with the BLM movement.¹²⁹
- Graham Hunter, the Vicar of St John's Hoxton, and his wife, Sara, a Licensed Lay Minister at St John's Hoxton, released a statement on racial justice following the killing of George Floyd in America.

Vicar Graham stated: 'Christians oppose fascism – along with racism, nationalism and white supremacism because it is a denial of the truth revealed in Scripture' – and that, as Christians, '[w]e must call people everywhere to repentance and transformation' and 'seek justice for our brothers and sisters of every ethnicity, nationality and culture – and at this time, this especially means standing with our black brothers and sisters against white supremacism and racism when it occurs in specific instances, as well as when it exists structurally and systemically in our society.' He went on to conclude his statement with repentance, saying that he wanted to:

'humbly beg the forgiveness of God, and the forgiveness of my brothers and sisters for the ways in which I have colluded with the forces of evil and enjoyed the rewards of an unjust society which gives me opportunity and status because I am

white, while denying it to my brothers and sisters. I have never consciously intended to behave in racist ways – but I have sometimes adopted lazy language, easy stereotypes, and had subconscious attitudes rooted in prejudice.'

Sara also spoke of the '[e]very day racism, institutional racism and systemic racism' within the UK as well as in the US because she doesn't 'want to sit in silence any more'. She also pointed out that 'we need to do better because Black Lives Matter.'¹³⁰

Manchester

- On 10 October 2020, the Manchester Diocesan Synod passed a motion put forward by the Diocese of Manchester Race, Inequality and Justice Group, affirming 'that every parish and Diocese in England is an appropriate place for global majority candidates to exercise their ministry and leadership.'¹³¹
- Bishop David Walker, Archdeacon Karen Lund, Canon Marcia Wall and Rev Aaron Jackman said a prayer for justice in support of the BLM movement.¹³²
- On 8 June 2020, Dean Rogers, Karen Lund, Marcia Wall and Aaron Jackman from the Diocese of Manchester held a 'Protesting Through Prayer' event on the diocese's Facebook page for the BLM movement.¹³³

Norwich

- Following a meeting in light of the BLM movement held by Bishops Graham, Alan and Jonathan, with some of the clergy and ordinands in the Diocese of Norwich who are part of the BAME community, Bishop Graham appointed Revd Karlene to the role of Bishop's Adviser for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Affairs.

Speaking of her appointment, Revd Karlene said:

*'Whilst there has been some progress over the years with regards to the Church's relationship and engagement with BAME communities...there is still a way to go as recent events have revealed. Much more needs to be done in order for the Church to be a place where ALL peoples, irrespective of their identities feel valued, welcomed and affirmed.'*¹³⁴

Oxford

- In January 2021, the Diocese of Oxford appointed Revd Polly Falconer as its first BAME Development enabler in a bid to strengthen 'its resolve to encourage, support and promote BAME vocations, participation and representation at all levels across the Diocese.'

Speaking of being appointed in the role, Revd Polly said that she thought the time was right 'to bring the BAME community into sharper focus within the church' following the BLM movement and the personal struggles which she says she has experienced as a black woman in the Church of England.¹³⁵

- Bishop Stephen Croft was amongst 11 Archbishops and 60 bishops who signed a statement by the Anglican Communion Environmental Network on environmental racism. They claim that the disproportionate impact of climate change on black people and the slow response of the world to this problem gives the impression that black lives don't matter.¹³⁶

Rochester

- On 5 June 2020, the Bishop of Rochester, Rt Revd James Langstaff, wrote a reflection following the death of George Floyd. In his reflection, Bishop James said that

the Church of England 'is itself stained by racism both in its history and in its current life.' He also said that despite some steps which have made in the Church, he is 'more convinced than ever that racism, within church and society, continues to be deeply rooted in individuals and institutions, in our attitudes and our practices.'¹³⁷

St Albans

- A picture of the Last Supper with a black Jesus was installed at St Albans Cathedral. In a statement regarding the picture, the cathedral said:

'We stand with the Black Lives Matter movement to be allies for change, building a strong, just and fair community where the dignity of every human being is honoured and celebrated, where black voices are heard, and where black lives matter.'

A spokeswoman also added that although it was the sentiment of the BLM movement which the cathedral supported, they do not 'uncritically support any political organisation'.¹³⁸

- On 15 June 2020, the Lord Bishop of St Albans, Rt Revd Alan Smith, asked the government what 'their assessment of ongoing protests led by the Black Lives Matter movement, and the consequent removal of statues and monuments' was.

Speaking to Baroness Williams of Trafford, Bishop Alan also commented that '[r]acism is deeply embedded, and it affects every part of society, including the Church'.¹³⁹

- In February 2020, Augustine Tanner-Ihm, a black trainee vicar, was turned down for a curacy role in the Diocese of St Albans – despite church leaders telling him he had 'obvious gifts' – because the demographic of parishioners

in the diocese were 'monochrome white working class' and so might make him feel 'uncomfortable'.¹⁴⁰

Tanner-Ihm only decided to publicly tell his story following the BLM protests and the Church of England's supportive reaction to them, although he said that the Church should 'use actions not words' when supporting the movement. He also called the Church institutionally racist.¹⁴¹

After Tanner-Ihm publicly spoke of his experience, a spokesperson for the Church of England said that the Diocese of St Albans had 'recognised its failure' and had sent him a written apology.¹⁴²

- On 7 June 2020, Revd Dr Ruth Carroll and her husband, Keith (a reader), attended a socially-distanced BLM demonstration in their parish of Holy Trinity Stevenage.¹⁴³
- Revd Nick Grew, Revd Sarah Hancock, Martin Ellway and Graham Hosker from St Francis Church released a statement to show their support for the statement made by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York on 2 June 2020. They also used their statement to say that they encouraged their 'congregation to continue to pray for all those who are affected by the systemic and blatant racism in the UK', and called for the country's leaders 'to implement change for a fairer society'.¹⁴⁴
- On 2 June 2020, Revd Jenni McQuaid of St Paul's Church, Letchworth, recorded a reflection in which she said that although she tries 'not to bring partisan politics into ministry', she thought issues regarding the value of human life were 'bigger' than this and so openly stated that 'black lives matter'. She also criticised those in power who were 'brandishing the Bible' and trying to silence protestors.¹⁴⁵

- In Revd Bill Britt's sermon for Trinity Sunday, he discussed the killing of George Floyd and the subsequent protests, as well as the history of racism and violence against black people. He claimed that violence against black people was not only a part of American history, but also a part of his own family history. He also spoke of hope for the future and told parishioners that 'every life matters to God, every black life matters', and asked them to pray for America and future relations between people of all races.¹⁴⁶

St Edmundsbury and Ipswich

- Almost 50 church leaders from a range of Christian denominations from the Ipswich area released a joint statement in support of those who face racial discrimination following the protests which occurred after the killing of George Floyd.

In their statement, the church leaders said that people must 'unite to call out racism wherever we see it and hold one another accountable for our words and actions.' Additionally, the leaders also stated that they were reaffirming their 'commitment to eradicating all forms of racism in all parts of society because every human life is precious and honoured by God.'

Rt Rev Martin Seeley, Bishop of the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, was one of the leaders who signed the statement. He also said that the killing of George Floyd brought 'the sin of racism into sharp focus' and that our differences should not be used 'to divide and destroy.'¹⁴⁷

- Church leaders in Suffolk from different denominations announced that they were holding a 24-hour vigil to

mark one month since the killing of George Floyd. Rt Rev Martin Seeley, Bishop of the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, was one of the leaders involved in the event and said that ‘praying together’ for racial justice was ‘the right place to begin.’ He also said that racism was present within the Church itself, saying: ‘We know that we have a long way to go in tackling racism – internationally, as a nation and in the church’.¹⁴⁸

Salisbury

- On 19 June 2020, Bishop Andrew released a response regarding BLM and the death of George Floyd on behalf of the Diocese of Salisbury. In his response he addressed the history of the Church of England in regards to race, stating: ‘For Christians, the past is no static deposit, but a narrative for retelling and remembering: conscious that we are on our way to a better place.’ He also spoke further on the importance of the role of the Church in future race relations, acknowledging that ‘[i]t is vital that the church in every place hears and responds to the moral protest being raised anew.’¹⁴⁹
- Bishop Nick Holtam was amongst 11 Archbishops and 60 bishops who signed a statement by the Anglican Communion Environmental Network on environmental racism. They claim that the disproportionate impact of climate change on black people and the slow response of the world to this problem gives the impression that black lives don’t matter.¹⁵⁰

Sheffield

- Anesia Cook, the Vicar of St Peter & St Oswald’s, Sheffield, released a reflection following the death of George Floyd.

In the reflection, she claimed: ‘Racism is not just an American issue, it is a humanity issue. That means it’s a Church issue too.’ Expanding on the point of racism as an issue for the Church of England, she highlighted that it is important the Church engages ‘in a deep and serious prayerful reflection on racism’ and ‘heed the call to rebuild society and work towards the eradication of racism.’¹⁵¹

- Following the death of George Floyd, the Bishop of Sheffield wrote to churches within the diocese regarding the BLM movement and racism. Regarding the issue of racism, the Bishop called it a ‘pernicious evil’ which was not only an issue in society generally, but also an issue for the Church of England. Therefore, the Bishop said that all bishops in the diocese ‘gladly’ associated themselves with the joint statement made by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York on 2 June 2020.

He also announced that the Diocese of Sheffield was ‘firmly’ recommitting themselves to the vote by the General Synod to ‘lament’ the past failure of the Church to confront racism, ‘acknowledge with gratitude the contribution of BAME Anglicans’, and ‘to increase their participation and representation in all parts of our church life.’

Furthermore, the Bishop also recommended some actions which members of the diocese could take themselves or encourage others to take. These recommendations included: becoming more aware of the challenges faced in the local area; watching a webinar on the disproportionate impact of Covid-19 on the BAME community and how to address the challenges facing the Church; and looking at

‘Ghost Ship’ – a study which explores institutional racism in the Church of England.¹⁵²

Sodor and Man

- In the summer of 2020, following the killing of George Floyd and the BLM events, it was announced that a review was under way of which church monuments and tombstones in the Diocese of Sodor and Man have links to slave trade.

The audit was launched by Rt Revd Peter Eagles, and speaking of the review he said that the Church should ‘acknowledge’ any ‘deep injustice and human sadness’ associated with the memorials – although, according to Revd Eagles, the purpose of the review is not necessarily ‘to remove or highlight particular items’, but to consider if the island’s history ‘needs to be better articulated’.¹⁵³

Southwark

- The Bishop of Southwark (Rt Revd Christopher Chessun) joined with leaders of the Diocese of Southwark to send a message of support to BLM protestors by taking picture of themselves holding a sign saying: ‘Our churches are closed, our hearts are open #BlackLivesMatter’.

Bishop Christopher said they ‘wanted to stand in solidarity with those who are lamenting, praying and protesting’, and that by releasing the photograph they hoped that it would ‘encourage others in the Diocese and more widely to stand firmly with those who will mark’ the two-week anniversary of the death of George Floyd.

Furthermore, Bishop Christopher also said that by working with the Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns

Committees, the Diocese of Southwark 'is committed to challenging and eradicating racism in all its forms.'¹⁵⁴

- During a service in Walworth on 8 June 2020, the Bishop of Southwark 'took the knee' for eight minutes and 46 seconds to show solidarity with the BLM movement and commemorate George Floyd.¹⁵⁵
- Bishop Richard Cheetham and Bishop David Atkinson were amongst 11 Archbishops and 60 bishops who signed a statement by the Anglican Communion Environmental Network on environmental racism. They claim that the disproportionate impact of climate change on black people and the slow response of the world to this problem gives the impression that black lives don't matter.¹⁵⁶

Southwell and Nottingham

- The Diocese of Southwell and Nottingham asked its parishioners to take part in a prayer for a moment of 'prayerful reflection, solidarity and unity' after the killing of George Floyd and the events which followed.¹⁵⁷
- On 5 June 2020, the Nottingham Majority Black Led Church Leaders released a joint statement in response to the killing of George Floyd. The group said that they 'stand with the family of George Floyd, and with all those who are peacefully protesting against all forms of racism and hate crime'.

They concluded their statement asking for three things. Firstly, for Nottingham citizens to lobby MPs and councillors to call for a change in legislation in order to ensure there is an increase of BAME representation at every level of the workplace. Secondly, for the police to have a BAME community outreach worker. Lastly, for

‘[a]ll citizens of Nottingham to back a call for a Nottingham Community Racial Equality Centre that reflects the local and global historical contribution of Black people.’¹⁵⁸ The Bishop of Southwell & Nottingham encouraged all Nottingham citizens to read their statement and respond to their call to action.

Truro

- The Bishop of Truro, Rt Revd Philip Mounstephen, called on all those within the diocese to ‘redouble’ their efforts to provide a welcome environment of all people, regardless of their ethnicity. He highlighted that just because Cornwall has a relatively small BAME population it does not mean matters of racism are ‘indifferent’ to the area, rather he said that ‘it’s in such communities that racism can be more, and not less, of a problem.’¹⁵⁹
- The Diocese of Truro’s BAME champion, Patrick Gilbert, said that one of his main goals in the role is to ensure that the Church becomes ‘a space that encourages people of all BAME backgrounds feel a sense of belonging and acceptance.’¹⁶⁰
- Bishop Philip Mountstephen was amongst 11 Archbishops and 60 bishops who signed a statement by the Anglican Communion Environmental Network on environmental racism. They claim that the disproportionate impact of climate change on black people and the slow response of the world to this problem gives the impression that black lives don’t matter.¹⁶¹

Winchester

- On 20 July 2020, Bishop Tim had a conversation with Revd Canon Yemi Adedeji about racism and equality in

the Church. During the conversation, Bishop Tim and Canon Yemi discussed the need to change all parts of society, including the Church itself.

Bishop Tim also highlighted the challenge of the Diocese of Winchester to increase the opportunities for BAME community, and emphasised the importance of the Racism Action Commission Taskforce (set up by the Archbishop of Canterbury) in providing accountability for dioceses within the Church of England and advocating for real change against racism in the Church.

In addition, Bishop Tim and Canon Yemi also discussed Companion Links and how the Diocese of Winchester can engage with Anglican Provinces across the world to help educate themselves on ethnic privilege, colonialism and racism, as well as how developing relationships with other provinces could help in reshaping what the Church looks like in the diocese through repentance and practical changes.¹⁶²

Worcester

- The Bishop of Worcester (Dr John Inge) and the Dean of Worcester (Peter Atkinson) ‘took the knee’ outside Worcester Cathedral for nine minutes to remember the amount of time George Floyd was unable to breathe and asked people to join them ‘in praying for a world in which Black Lives Matter.’

Addressing those watching, the Dean of Worcester also commented on the Church of England’s history of racism and inequality. He said:

‘the Church has often oppressed, marginalised, or forgotten people. The Church has been complicit in making slaves of black

*people, persecuting Jewish people, waging crusades against Muslim people, criminalising gay people, oppressing women, and abusing children. God breathed into all people the breath of life, but so often ours has been the knees that have squeezed the life from others.*¹⁶³

York

- In a joint statement with the Archbishop of Canterbury on 2 June 2020, the Archbishop of York responded to the recent events in America. The two Archbishops said that the events once again showed ‘the ongoing evil of white supremacy’. They talked of the systemic racism which causes incalculable harm across the world’ and highlighted that ‘racism is an affront to God. It is born out of ignorance, and must be eradicated.’¹⁶⁴
- Rt Rev Stephen Cottrell (the Archbishop of York) expressed his opinion on racism within the Church of England. When speaking to the *Sunday Times*, Archbishop Stephen claimed: ‘Jesus was a black man and he was born into a persecuted group in an occupied country.’ He was also critical of the fact that the Church’s leadership was ‘too white’ and said that the Church had failed to address ‘the deep systemic issues of exclusion and prejudice’.¹⁶⁵

The Church therefore requires a significant shift away from its current position in declaring historic and institutional or systemic racism, and adopting spurious critical race theory narratives – often without the evidence to support those claims. In April 2021, Calvin Robinson wrote an article for *The Telegraph*¹⁶⁶ which focuses on ‘From Lament to Action’ – the key 2021 report written by the Archbishops’ Anti-Racism Taskforce that sets out a series of actions the Church should take in order to change its culture. He calls the report

a 'confirmation that the Church has fully signed up to a divisive new doctrine that threatens to damage its sacred mission.'

Robinson's critique of the report stems from his belief that the report 'starts from a position of guilt' and 'provides dogma' rather than strong evidence of institutional discrimination. Additionally, Robinson contends that '[d]espite claiming not to be motivated by identity politics, it is implicitly laden with critical race theory'.

The commentator also expresses his criticism of what the report proposes. For instance, the report calls for there to be positive discrimination – something which Robinson disagrees with as he argues 'all discrimination leads to division and resentment' – and has what he describes as a 'troubling' increased focus on unconscious bias training. Instead, he argues, the message the Anti-Racism Taskforce should be promoting is what the Bible proclaims: 'there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus' (Galatians 3:28). Moving forward, we should conclude, the position of the Church should be in talking to its own parishioners and wider society about what people have in common, rather than raking through politicised identity concerns that simply continue to divide us.

2.

The Church, English society and Unconscious Bias Training for ‘growing closer to the mind of Christ’

- *Over a quarter of all Dioceses (11 of 42) appoint clergy who appear very supportive of using unconscious bias training within the Church.*

The theory underlying unconscious bias training (UBT) is far from accepted as a social norm; it is often widely contested outside of a narrow band of activist-constructed state networks. ‘Bias’ tends to refer to a prejudice held by an individual, group or institution which is either in favour or against one thing, person or social/identity group (such as race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation and so forth) compared with another. According to modern psychological theories, however, it is then assumed biases can be categorised as either conscious or unconscious, and lead to both positive and negative consequences.¹⁶⁷

Unconscious biases can be defined as social stereotypes about certain groups of people that individuals form outside of their own conscious awareness. It is assumed everyone holds unconscious beliefs about different groups, and so the biases stem from an individual’s tendency to organise social

worlds through categorising.¹⁶⁸ As a result, unconscious bias can influence an individual's judgement without them being aware of it,¹⁶⁹ even with those who believe they are committed to equality. Consequently, the claim goes, unconscious bias is harder to spot and eliminate than more obvious forms of discrimination.¹⁷⁰ It is assumed the alleged bias must be dealt with through a specialist training programme and that because it is unconscious (beneath the level of what one consciously believes) one must be advised about their existence through an expert training course – and from thereon in, how to resolve the bias.

One way in which attempts have been made to eliminate unconscious bias has been through UBT. It is alleged that such training aims to make people aware of any potentially harmful unconscious biases they may possess and to reduce the impact of such biases on their interactions with others¹⁷¹ in a 'blame-free manner'.¹⁷²

UBT itself can take place in many forms, both in-person and online. For instance, you may be asked to attend a presentation about the impact of biases on stigmatised groups, and the universality of such biases; you may be asked to roleplay as a hiring manager to consider how you evaluate candidates from different social/identity groups; or you may be asked to participate in workshops that suggest a number of strategies for overcoming bias.¹⁷³ However, one of the most common forms of UBT is being asked to take an implicit association test. This involves categorising images based on your own judgements, such as 'black'/'white' and 'good'/'bad', then, once the test has been completed, you are debriefed, given information on unconscious bias theory and offered suggestions for how to reduce its effect on your own behaviour.¹⁷⁴

The idea of 'fighting bias' has become increasingly

popular over the past few years, with diversity and inclusion professionals seeing a surge in demand for their services since 2018. And it is a practice ‘which is rapidly making its way across the Atlantic’ – with UBT being ‘[o]ne of the most prominent manifestations of this trend’.¹⁷⁵

The death of George Floyd in May 2020 also resulted in unconscious bias becoming a part of the mainstream, as the subsequent BLM protests led to more companies having an increasing focus on addressing inequality.¹⁷⁶ Nevertheless, even before the death of George Floyd, the Church of England had already pledged their commitment to introducing UBT.

However, the sense of imbalance in the Church’s approach to UBT as an accepted practice is made clear by a recent government-commissioned report. In March 2021, the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities released a report¹⁷⁷ in which they were critical of organisations using UBT. The Commission stated they ‘were not impressed’ by companies which pointed to their use of UBT as evidence ‘of their progressive credentials.’ Instead, the Commission said they ‘were impressed by more conscious attempts to foster talent from a wide range of backgrounds.’

Other research was also referenced by the Commission with regard to the impact of UBT – and it was noted that the training was widely shown ‘to have unclear or mixed impact’ from previous research that had been undertaken. A specific reference was made to research by the Equality and Human Rights Commission which found that the training’s ability to effectively change the behaviour of those who participate in it as ‘limited’, as well as discovering a ‘potential for back-firing effects when UBT participants are exposed to information that suggests stereotypes and biases are unchangeable.’ Accordingly, the Commission called

on organisations to abandon their use of UBT and instead introduce interventions that ‘can be measured or evaluated for their efficacy’.

The Church appears to take a wholly different view. In April 2016, the central members of the Crown Nominations Commission in the Church took part in UBT, and all members of the Commission have since been receiving training – with it becoming a part of the induction for newly-elected central members since September 2017.¹⁷⁸ Additionally, in December 2019 the Church of England announced that it would be using UBT to ensure that half of its leaders were female by 2030 – and this training had already been introduced at Church House in Westminster.¹⁷⁹

The increasing popularity of UBT in recent years has coincided with a greater use of the training by the Church of England. Swimming with the tide of ultra-progressivism, it is far from unusual for each Diocese to have taken steps to incorporate the Church’s recommendations of UBT. It is sometimes claimed to be ‘a helpful instrument’ for raising ‘awareness of the pain of racial discrimination’. For example, following the BLM protests in 2020, the Bishop of Bristol announced the diocese would be offering UBT.¹⁸⁰ And the Diocese of Exeter’s Bishop Robert also began encouraging every licensed clergyperson and reader in the diocese to sign up to online UBT sessions – announcing that the diocese would offer key parish personnel the opportunity to work through a bespoke 30-minute online e-learning training module.¹⁸¹

The use of UBT also has many supporters among the clergy.¹⁸² One member of the clergy who is noted to be a supporter of UBT is the Archdeacon of Oxford, Ven. Martin Gorick. According to the Archdeacon, UBT is ‘very unthreatening’ and can be enlightening for those who participate. As such, all members of the Diocesan Director

of Ordinands team, all vocation advisers and all senior staff within the diocese have undertaken the training.¹⁸³

The Archdeacon of Berkshire, Ven. Olivia Graham, is also noted to be a supporter of UBT. Speaking of the training, the Archdeacon called it 'really helpful' and said she believed '[i]t was the first step in bringing to light things that are hidden in the darkness, and bringing about such a culture change.' She also expressed her hope that the training would result in greater diversity by bringing about more female ordinands and clergy, as well as more black and minority ethnic clergy.¹⁸⁴

Furthermore, Rt Revd Sarah Mullally (the Bishop of London) – who undertook the training herself, outside of the Church – says the training is about 'encouraging people to make conscious choices to enable the diocese to reflect the population we are serving', and claims that the increase in women appointed to positions in some areas could be as a result of the training. The Diocese of London has adopted the training, 'starting with senior staff and PCCs of parishes that fall into vacancy, before they begin the appointment process'; and is also running all of its job advertisements past the Dean of BAME Affairs and the Dean of Women's Ministry to ensure their wording 'does not put off women or BAME candidates.'¹⁸⁵

Despite UBT seeming to grow in popularity and becoming increasingly mainstream, it remains a significantly contested practice. Fatima Tresh (a social and organisational psychologist) believes the backlash largely stems from the attitude that the training is 'a tick-box exercise: if everybody in the organisation just attends this e-learning module or quick training session, that will fix all of our problems or will show that we're not a biased or discriminatory organisation'.¹⁸⁶

One well-known critic of the training, Bill Michael (KPMG's former UK chair), called the concept of unconscious bias 'complete and utter crap' – arguing that it led to no improvement.¹⁸⁷ And it appears that Michael is not alone in his critique, as *The Guardian* reported that data revealed 'there was diminishing confidence among leaders that [UBT] alone was enough to ensure a fair, consistent and effective process.'¹⁸⁸

As pointed out by Sam Ashworth-Hayes in an article for *The Spectator*, a significant amount of the controversy surrounding UBT 'shakes out on party lines, with progressives eager to embrace a tool which shows them what they already know – that everyone is deeply tainted by the original sin of racism and must seek absolution – and conservatives equally keen to reject something they see as a tool for advancing a left-wing agenda.'¹⁸⁹

Therefore, it may not be surprising to some that at the end of 2020 the Conservative government announced UBT would no longer be undertaken by civil servants in England. Speaking of their decision, the government said that there was 'no proof that such training changes behaviour – and that it can "backfire" and create a negative response.'¹⁹⁰

Among research cited by the government was a study by Dr Patrick Forscher, who examined over 400 studies on unconscious bias. He said there were few studies which measured changes over time, but among 'the most robust of those that did', the findings suggested 'changes in implicit bias don't last'.¹⁹¹

The government's review of the academic literature into UBT also echoes the findings of an assessment conducted by the Equality and Human Rights Commission in 2018, which found a 'mixed picture' of the training's effectiveness.¹⁹²

To inquire into the scale of support for UBT practices

within the Church of England, the following analysis shows the reported instances of clergy involvement in its recent deployment across the dioceses. By observing and recording the involvement of the appointed Bishops, vicars, Rectors, ministers or other clergy in calling for UBT – particularly since the rise of the BLM campaign – some measure can be made of the clergy-adopted progressivist values within each diocese. Again, by measuring the reported instances, articles, statements and reports on seeking for greater UBT practices in the Church and Church-affiliated websites and across media outlets relating to each diocese, we can plausibly evaluate how the leadership and clergy within the various regional dioceses are responding to an ultra-progressive agenda.

Birmingham

- On the Diocese of Birmingham's website, they announced that they are offering 'Unconscious Bias training as blended learning approach.'

The training will explore what affects decision making and suggest ideas of how to think/act differently. It will include two stages: the first stage will involve learning what unconscious bias is; and the second stage will be a group session with a trainer, exploring strategies that can be developed to reduce affinity, perception and confirmation biases.¹⁹³

- The Diocese of Birmingham have a range of UBT events in their church calendar.^{194 195 196 197 198 199}

Bristol

- Following the BLM protests in the summer of 2020, the Bishop of Bristol assured members of the diocese that

racial justice was at the top of her and her team of staff's agenda. Therefore, she announced that the Diocese of Bristol would be offering UBT as one way to try and improve participation in the Church.²⁰⁰

Chelmsford

- When the House of Bishops was asked if they were 'aware of evidence that unconscious bias training is ineffective in increasing the representation or advancement of minority groups within organisations, and may even be counterproductive in that regard', the Bishop of Chelmsford replied on behalf of the Chair of the House of Bishops.

He defended the use of UBT and claimed that the question misunderstood 'the nature and purpose' of it. He said the objective of the training is not to increase the representation of minority groups, but rather to achieve a 'better and more conscious awareness of one's self, and better and more conscious decision making which will benefit the Church' – which he stated it had done in a number of other organisations.²⁰¹

- The Diocese of Chelmsford have a couple of UBT events in their church calendar.^{202 203}
- On the Diocese of Chelmsford's website, it states that as part of their drive towards 'radical inclusion and growth in Christian vocations among all God's people,' they 'take unconscious bias training seriously' and 'are working hard to ensure that everyone working in vocations is trained in this.'²⁰⁴

Europe

- In a document regarding racism and racial justice, the Diocese of Europe lists a number of recommendations for addressing racial injustice and discrimination, including UBT – which they claim is ‘a helpful instrument’ for raising ‘awareness of the pain of racial discrimination.’²⁰⁵

Exeter

- Since September 2020, Bishop Robert has been encouraging every licensed clergy person and reader in the Diocese of Exeter to sign up to online UBT sessions. Therefore, from 1 November 2020, it was announced the diocese would be offering key parish personnel the opportunity to work through a bespoke 30-minute online e-learning training module.²⁰⁶

Leeds

- Revd Dr Hayley Matthews, Director of Lay Training, wrote a blog entitled ‘Does “Othering” Exist in Our Church, and Does this Lead to Exclusion?’ – where she states that the Diocese of Leeds will be rolling out UBT.

When discussing UBT, Revd Hayley Matthews acknowledges that although taking part in the training may ‘be somewhat painful’ for some people, it does bring ‘light and growth to the open-mind and open hearted.’²⁰⁷

Leicester

- On the Diocese of Leicester’s website, there is a page solely focused on UBT. On the webpage, it is stated that the diocese is committed to offering UBT ‘as part of a wider package of training programmes and project initiatives designed to promote racial equality and fulfil its safeguarding commitments.’²⁰⁸

- The Diocese of Leicester's church calendar states that as part of the diocese's commitment to become 'a more culturally diverse and aware church', they will be running 'unconscious bias training mornings' once a month via Zoom.²⁰⁹

London

- On the Diocese of London's website, they state that the diocese welcomes the Church of England's recommendations of UBT as they want the diocese 'to be a place where all are appreciated and valued, and where individual people can utilise their unique strengths.'

The webpage also includes quotes from four different members of the Diocese of London (Revd Richard Springer, Fiona MacMillan, Revd Jane Manley and Very Revd Dr David Ison) praising UBT. For instance, Very Revd Dr David Ison said:

*'Doing UB training was an eye-opener for me – not only as to ways in which our structures and ways of doing things can discriminate, but also how individually and together we can challenge ourselves and change to become more like Christ. Don't miss the opportunity!'*²¹⁰

- Speaking on the Church of England's decision to use UBT to help ensure half of its leaders are female by 2030, the Bishop of London (Sarah Mullally) said that she hopes the training will help stop men hiring employees in their own image and create a 'different' kind of conversation in the Church.²¹¹
- During a discussion in the House of Bishops, Revd Andrew Foreshew-Cain acknowledged that UBT was most commonly used around gender and race to

help address the possibility of unrecognised bias in appointment procedures. He therefore asked the Chair of the House of Bishops:

*'Are there any plans for the House of Bishops to recommend similar [unconscious bias] training around sexuality in the selection and appointment of LGBTQIA clergy and lay members to Church appointments and in unconscious attitudes towards the LGBTQIA communities in wider society?'*²¹²

Newcastle

- When asked by Revd Andrew Foreshow-Cain if there were plans to recommend UBT around sexuality – as he believed it was most commonly centred around race and gender – the Bishop of Newcastle responded with praise of the potential of UBT. He said:

'It is not tailored exclusively to gender and/or race, and someone who has fully engaged with Unconscious Bias training will be sensitised to the potential for such bias in many settings and, if they have learned well, will understand how to recognise and resist unconscious bias in their own thinking and in processes in which they take part.'

Additionally, the Bishop of Newcastle added that the Church of England would continue to offer UBT 'as widely as possible' because they 'believe it is an essential part of growing closer to the mind of Christ in all our dealings with our own members and others.'²¹³

St Albans

- In their church calendar, the Diocese of St Albans has listed that UBT will take place via Zoom this year.²¹⁴

Southwark

- Speaking to the Church of England's General Synod, Rosemarie Mallet (a vicar in the Diocese of Southwark) suggested that the Church offering UBT on its own was not enough to solve the issue of racism – in other words, it needed to be 'a part of a systemic approach to challenging and reducing bias that the leadership of the institution is leading on'.²¹⁵ She said that the Church of England must acknowledge its own institutional racism and produce a plan of action that amounted to 'more than a one-off unconscious bias training course'.²¹⁶

3.

How the 'climate emergency' is creating a new place of worship

- *Over 70 per cent of all Dioceses (71 per cent) appoint clergy who promote climate activist warnings and calls for recognition of the 'climate emergency'.*
- *Over half of all declarations (55.85 per cent) from the clergy promoting climate activist warnings and recognition of the 'climate emergency' occurred within 12 months after the 'Holy Week' support for the climate protests in April 2019.*

The idea underlying the claim to a 'climate emergency' is far from accepted as a factual and societal norm; it is questioned among the general population and outside of a narrow band of environmental activist-constructed state networks. The long campaign of environmental activism within institutions seeking for recognition of climate action has been notable in recent decades. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has found that between 1880 and 2012, the average global temperature increased by 0.85 degrees Celsius. According to the United Nations (UN), this trend of an increase in temperature has not changed course, with 2010-2019 becoming the warmest decade ever recorded.²¹⁷ Furthermore, despite the Covid-19 pandemic which saw

countries go into lockdown for a significant proportion of the year, the World Meteorological Organization found that 2020 was still one of the three warmest years on record.²¹⁸

Accordingly, there have been responses from governments, organisations, institutions and members of the public to help combat climate change. Over 190 countries have adopted the Paris Agreement – a legally binding international treaty on climate change with the aim of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius;²¹⁹ companies such as Coca-Cola aim to reduce their carbon footprint by 25 per cent by 2025;²²⁰ and in 2018, 1,500 members of the public assembled on Parliament Square to announce a Declaration of Rebellion against the UK Government – the beginning of the group known as ‘Extinction Rebellion’ (XR).²²¹

XR is an international movement where members of the public use ‘non-violent civil disobedience in an attempt to halt mass extinction and minimise the risk of social collapse.’²²² The group has among its key aims: for government to declare ‘a climate and ecological emergency, working with other institutions to communicate the urgency for change.’²²³ It could be argued that it is one of the most influential pressure groups in living memory, with the government now a signed up member of the ‘climate emergency’ doctrine since May 2019.²²⁴

This alarmist notion of a ‘climate emergency’ has also made its way – often without question or scrutiny – across UK state institutions and directly into the discourse of the Church of England. Even prior to the formation of XR and the idea of a climate emergency, the Church had been active in its support for the environment. For instance, in 2005, the General Synod agreed on the need for Church-wide action on climate change issues following the ‘Sharing God’s Planet’ report, and actions have been taken in accordance

with this,²²⁵ both in the Church as a whole and in individual dioceses.

More recently the climate change agenda appears to have taken a more pressing, if not zealous, focus for the Church. In 2020 the Church launched its first ever Green Lent campaign,²²⁶ as well as voting overwhelmingly in favour to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions for its operations by 2030 (strengthening their original proposal to reach that target by 2045).²²⁷

As for the role of XR and the recognition of a climate emergency more specifically, the past few years have seen numerous comments and actions by members of the Church of England. For example, during a speech to mark the Global Ethical Finance Summit, the Archbishop of Canterbury proclaimed: 'The situation we find ourselves in has rightly been called a climate emergency.'²²⁸ He even expressed criticism towards the Church of England itself, claiming that investors 'had not sufficiently stepped up to the plate' on driving the low-carbon transition, including the Church's own fund arm, and so called on investors to remove fossil fuel firms from their portfolio and to push the companies they do invest in to reduce their environmental impact.²²⁹

Within the individual dioceses across the Church of England, a range of support has also been given to the idea of a climate emergency: churches began a campaign of bell ringing in a bid to draw attention to the climate emergency;²³⁰ and reverends have even been arrested during XR protests.^{231 232 233 234}

However, despite increasing support for the notion of a climate emergency, it is very rarely presented by the Church as an argument which requires a balanced understanding.

Reasons to be sceptical of ultra-progressive climate activism

A global network of over 800 scientists and experienced professionals signed the Climate Intelligence Foundation's (Clintel) World Climate Declaration in support of the message: 'There is NO Climate Emergency'.

The six statements of Clintel's declaration are:

1. 'Natural as well as anthropogenic factors cause warming'.

Since the geological archive reveals the climate has varied for as long as Earth has existed, they argue it is no surprise that we are now experiencing a period of warming.

2. 'Warming is far slower than predicted'.

As the world has warmed 'significantly less' than expected, they suggest that our understanding of climate change is not complete enough.

3. 'Climate policy relies on inadequate models'.

Due to their view that climate models have many shortcomings, they contend the models are not plausible as policy tools.

4. 'CO₂ is plant food, the basis of all life on Earth'.

They claim that carbon dioxide is not a pollutant, rather it is essential to life on earth, and so more carbon dioxide is actually beneficial.

5. 'Global warming has not increased natural disasters'.

'There is no evidence that global warming is intensifying hurricanes, floods, droughts and suchlike, or making them more frequent. Moreover, in the past 100 years there has been a sharp decrease in climate-related deaths due to adaptation.'

6. 'Climate policy must respect scientific and economic realities'.

As the signatories hold that there is no climate emergency, they therefore oppose the 'harmful and unrealistic' net-zero carbon dioxide mitigation policy and say it is 'irresponsible' to spend large amounts of money on a mitigation policy 'based on inadequate computer models.'²³⁵

Despite the Church and many state actors which recycle the often-familiar and yet controversial narratives of a climate emergency, it could not possibly claim to be supported by a vast body of observational data. In a study published by the Global Warming Policy Foundation, Indur Goklany (2021) finds that while the climate may have become warmer, most weather phenomena have not become more extreme or more destructive.²³⁶ It cannot be right in a civil society that those who proclaim the ongoing 'climate emergency' demands to change ordinary life are not at least prepared to be tolerant of different views, or quantitative evidence, which goes against their narrative.

The reference to a climate emergency is to mischaracterise all public concern for environmental change, particularly

given that it is wrong for the state to advocate panic and alarm.²³⁷ As Harry Wilkinson at the Global Warming Policy Foundation argues, it is often the critics of such an emergency who have stood up for science and the scientific method. Bleak and alarmist references to a climate emergency seem to have a non-scientific basis. While some scientists might think the regular IPCC models offer some helpful guidance, to reference or even advocate a 'climate emergency' is to displace any idea of calmly and rationally assessing the risks of climate change. It is to promote a needless 'us versus them' kind of culture war on debate.

The evidence in this chapter shows how the Church since 2019 has increasingly interacted its message of faith with activist ideology. For example, in an article for *The Telegraph*, Rosa Williams discussed the people who were deciding to join XR protests, including Canon John Halkes (a retired vicar from Lostwithiel in Cornwall) and Revd Helen Burnett from the Church of England.²³⁸ Speaking of their reasons for involving themselves with XR, Canon John stated that if it is to be believed the planet is 'God's gift', then 'who are we to trash it? We've got to become more valuing of our neighbours and animals. We should be saving it for future generations.'²³⁹ Revd Helen said: 'We have to start being neighbours to God's creation in a way we haven't been for decades' as climate change is 'the single biggest crisis that we face at the moment'.²⁴⁰

In October 2019, an article for the *Church Times* discussed the Bishop of Liverpool (Rt Revd Paul Bayes) and the Bishop of Colchester (Rt Revd Roger Morris) joining XR protestors in Trafalgar Square.²⁴¹ Bishop Morris joined members of Christian Climate Action in Trafalgar Square and outside Scotland Yard. Speaking of his involvement in XR's protest, he said: 'When our very existence is threatened by our

insatiable exploitation of this precious earth, we have to speak up and we have to take action.’ He also publicly expressed his support for XR and their ethos, saying:

‘It is this sense of urgency that lies behind the non-violent direct action of the kind we are seeing in London and around the world. This is a wake-up call to the world. It is prophetic; so I thank God for Extinction Rebellion, and I pray their voice may be heard – for all our sakes.’

Bishop Bayes also took part in the protest by taking part in a public reading from Revelation. Following the event, he posted a message of support for XR’s cause on Twitter:

‘Standing as part of @ExtinctionR London, with many Christians, reading from Revelation in Trafalgar Square, remembering our hope in Jesus in a dark time, standing in solidarity with those of all faiths and none who see the terrible urgency of our situation as a planet.’²⁴²

The former Archbishop of Canterbury saw faith as central to the campaign. In an article for the *Church Times*, Joe Ware wrote about how the former Archbishop, Rt Revd Lord Williams, joined members of XR (known as Christian Climate Action) in a march from Buckingham Palace to Parliament Square in September 2020 to demand stronger action to tackle climate change.²⁴³ When asked why he thought it was important for people of faith to attend the rally, Lord Williams responded: ‘People of faith should be here because they are people of faith. That is, they believe they can make a difference of some kind and that that difference is worth making...’²⁴⁴

The very nature of ‘climate catastrophe’ and the emergency raised by XR defines the actions of the Church clergy who feel they must then take the necessary personal action in ‘raising the alarm’. An article for *Christian Climate Action* discussed

the occupation of Lambeth Bridge in Westminster by Church leaders as part of the XR's 'International Rebellion' to force governments to take swifter action on climate change.²⁴⁵ One of those who took part in the occupation of Lambeth Bridge was Revd John Swales. Discussing why he decided to take part in the protest, Revd John said:

*'The science is clear. Unless we radically change the way we live in the world we will face the full force of climate catastrophe. I want to play my part in raising the alarm for the sake of the world's most vulnerable and the next generation, and also contribute to a renewed imagination of future possibilities.'*²⁴⁶

A separate article discussed Revd Stephen Nunn – a former rector in Sussex and a senior chaplain at HM Prison Kingston – who was arrested for nine days following being charged with conspiring to cause criminal damage, and was therefore unable to take part in the climate change demonstrations organised by XR.²⁴⁷ Revd Stephen had previously protested with XR to demand action to tackle climate change. Notably, in October 2019, he spent two weeks outside Downing Street as part of XR protests.

When explaining why he decided to join the protests, Revd Stephen said:

*'Like many, I have written letters, emails, signed petitions, held banners, chanted chants, and listened to endless poems. But this has had a minor effect. Those in power have to act swiftly and effectively to prevent a global catastrophe.'*²⁴⁸

Accordingly, although he admitted he did not want to go to prison or lose his liberty, job, home and security, he stated that he believed 'inconveniencing and interrupting' people in power was vital to bring about change so that his grandchildren were not one of the final generations; so that his charitable work in Kolkata was not 'swept away by the

Ganges'; and so that those in the global South do not 'face a terrifying future of famine, war and sickness.'²⁴⁹

Revd Stephen also called for Christians to act on the issue, saying it was no 'time for fence-sitting.' He said:

'Christians have always played a key role in influencing governments in matters of social justice, and that is what they should be doing now. It's one of those issues where we can truly make a difference.'

*'It was great to see Rowan Williams on the front line of an Extinction Rebellion march the other day, along with many other Christians of all denominations. If the Church put in ten per cent of the energy it has expended on issues surrounding sex, we might get something real done on climate change.'*²⁵⁰

The XR campaign has been highly appreciative of Church support, particularly from the Church of England. In October 2019, Ellen Teague and Liz Dodd wrote an article for *The Tablet* regarding XR's invite to a discussion about protest, called 'Responding to the Climate Emergency and the place of Civil Disobedience', by the Religious of the Assumption in Kensington.²⁵¹ A speaker from XR, Olly Hawes, told the audience at the event that he was completely blown away by Church support, particularly from the Church of England, during the two-weeks of action in October' – praising both members of the Church for joining protests and the practical support it had offered to protestors.

To inquire into the scale of support for the 'climate emergency' narrative within the Church of England, the following analysis looks into the reported instances of the clergy's declarations and announcements for climate activism and 'climate emergency' across the regional dioceses. By observing and recording the involvement of the appointed Bishops, vicars, Rectors, ministers or other clergy in referring to climate activist statements – particularly

since the rise of the XR campaign – some measure can be made of the clergy-adopted environmental progressivist values within each diocese. By measuring climate activist messaging in the Church and Church-affiliated websites and across media outlets relating to each diocese, it is feasible to draw conclusions as to how the leadership and clergy within the various regional dioceses are approaching the adoption of a contemporary ultra-progressive agenda.

Birmingham

- On 16 November 2019 the Birmingham Diocesan Synod passed a motion which recognised that there is a ‘global climate emergency’. To combat this, they set targets within the motion for the diocese to achieve. These included having all parts of the diocese achieving net zero emissions by 2030 and committing to develop an action plan and resources for sustainable living.²⁵²
- On 24 March 2018, the Birmingham Diocesan Synod approved Birmingham’s Diocesan Environmental Policy. Some of the commitments made in the policy include ensuring ‘the environment is properly considered in investment decisions and in the maintenance of buildings under its control’, as well as encouraging ‘the Diocesan Advisory Committee for the Care of Churches to ensure that the environment is properly considered in the maintenance and development of churches and churchyards’.²⁵³
- The Diocese of Birmingham is home to the Birmingham Anglican Climate Action group – a group of volunteers who encourage fellow members of the diocese and the wider Anglican Communion to assist in combating climate change.²⁵⁴

- In order to develop a strategy to respond to the climate emergency and meet the Church of England's target to become carbon net zero by 2030, the diocese set up the Church of England Birmingham Environmental Board, led by the Bishop of Birmingham. A Net Zero Environment Group has also been set up with a particular focus on the 2030 net zero target.²⁵⁵
- On 29 June 2020, 72 people from churches across Birmingham (including people from the Church of England) gathered together to learn about the effects of global warming and to say 'there is no Planet B'.²⁵⁶

Blackburn

- The Blackburn Diocesan Synod has approved 'A Vision of Creation' which provides the framework of how those in the diocese will work together to fulfil the Fifth Mark of Mission – that is to strive to safeguard the integrity of Creation and sustain and renew the life of the earth.²⁵⁷
- In a message to the diocese, the Bishop of Blackburn (Rt Revd Julian Henderson) stated that one challenge which will face us after the coronavirus pandemic is the environment. When discussing the environment, he stated: 'We must listen carefully to the voice of nature as we address climate change.' For instance, he said: 'The scourge of plastic waste also has to be addressed' by both suppliers and consumers, and that the Church's energy use will be affected by the 2030 carbon neutral deadline.²⁵⁸
- Revd Dr Anderson Jeremiah warned about the need for action from the Church to tackle different issues which are affecting the world. He said: 'The church, as a political community, has the language and imagination to offer

an alternative, a critique.’ And, additionally, claims that ‘[b]eing politically active and standing up for social justice, speaking for the most vulnerable in our midst is essential for the church.’

He also spoke of how Jesus did not tell people to only look after themselves, compromise their principles and ‘forget about the climate crisis’, but rather how Jesus Himself ‘stood up to a colonial power and challenged those who propped it up’ and invites His followers ‘to think of duty and service’.²⁵⁹

Bristol

- In April 2019, Revd Sue Parfitt was arrested during an XR protest when she and other protestors blocked Oxford Circus. She has since said that she would continue to resort to civil disobedience as a form of protest because ‘if we are to survive as a race and as a creation, we have to take the most radical, unpopular, counter-intuitive action’.²⁶⁰
- After a unanimous vote from the Diocesan Synod, the Diocese of Bristol declared a climate emergency. Speaking of the vote, Bishop Viv said:

‘By declaring Climate Emergency, our practical action and collective voice will send a strong message. The situation is urgent. There is a need for us all to stop, to rethink, to rework how we act, to find all sorts of ways to tread more lightly on God’s glorious earth. We must all act now.’²⁶¹

- The Bishop of Swindon (Rt Revd Lee Rayfield) and Revd Canon Martin Gainsborough, (the Diocesan Environmental Officer) met with XR campaigners to listen to their views regarding caring for the planet. They

did this in a bid to find out the campaigners' concerns to see how churches in the diocese could respond to the environmental crisis.²⁶²

- The Diocese of Bristol announced that on 21 March 2020 they would be holding a conference to support churches in the area in taking further action to care for the environment. The conference would include speakers, practical workshops on creative expression, moving worship, and a chance to network and share materials.²⁶³
- On 28 February 2020, when there was a 'School Strike 4 Climate' march in Bristol, Greta Thunberg spent time in Bristol Cathedral to prepare for the event and to liaise with the teenagers who organised it. Greta Thunberg also spoke with Bishop Viv Faull and Canon Michael Johnson before leaving for the event.

Canon Michael spoke on behalf of the Cathedral Chapter and said he was 'delighted' Greta came 'to Bristol to raise awareness of climate change and encourage action to care for God's creation more effectively'.²⁶⁴

- The Diocese of Bristol published their own Environment and Climate Justice Policy – which they said they had created because '[w]e are facing an urgent environment crisis which risks jeopardising life on earth for future generations and further damaging the eco-systems of the natural world.'

The policy contains seven commitments from the diocese, such as '[w]orking with a range of communities on environmental issues' and '[p]rioritising environmental issues in our financial decision-making'.²⁶⁵

Canterbury

- In a speech to mark the Global Ethical Finance Summit, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, proclaimed that we were in the midst of ‘a climate emergency’ and, according to the Archbishop, investors had ‘not sufficiently stepped up to the plate’ on driving the low-carbon transition, including the Church of England’s own fund arm. He called on investors to remove fossil fuel firms from their portfolio and to push the companies they do invest in to reduce their environmental impact.²⁶⁶
- The Archbishop of Canterbury launched the Church of England’s first ever Green Lent campaign in 2020. For the official launch of the event, environmentalists, activists and climate experts gathered at Lambeth Palace and were invited to add personal climate commitments to a ‘pledge-tree’. The Archbishop also chaired a panel of climate academics, influencers and activists.

Instead of choosing to give something up for Lent, those participating in the Lent campaign were asked to follow a set of daily reflections which correspond to chapters of the Archbishop’s Lent book.

Launching the resources, the Archbishop said ‘We urgently need to rebuild our relationship with our planet. To do this, we need to change our habits – in how we pray and how we act.’ He also said he hoped that during Lent people would ‘engage with God’s plea for us to care for His creation’.²⁶⁷

- The Diocese of Canterbury have published on their website what they are working on in terms of their buildings, energy and water; land and green space;

meetings, hospitality, food and waste; and local and global communities. For instance, the diocese declare that they are ‘working to adopt the national standards for environmental considerations when improving parsonage housing’ and that they are considering ‘developing a transport/car sharing plan and make this known to staff members to discourage solo car journeys’.²⁶⁸

- In a video entitled ‘Archbishop Justin Welby on the Climate Emergency’, the Archbishop of Canterbury declares that ‘climate change is the greatest challenge that we and future generations face.’ He states that whilst some may view the problem of climate change as one for the future, places like Fiji and Nigeria are already experiencing the consequences, and therefore ‘following Jesus must include standing alongside those that are on the front line of this unfolding catastrophe.’²⁶⁹

Carlisle

- On 14 October 2019, Revd Jo Rand spent over 20 hours in custody after being arrested for ‘wilful obstruction of the highway’ during an XR protest.

In an article for *Metro*, Revd Jo Rand said that she participated in the protest because she believes the planet is ‘in an emergency situation’ and heading towards a climate crisis. Additionally, she said that she is ‘extremely impressed’ with the ethos of XR because although some people may be critical of it, ‘history shows us that non-violent direct action does bring change.’ She also pointed out that she viewed XR’s ethos of ‘non-violent, listening, non-hierarchical, relationship-building’ as ‘consonant with what the church ought to be, but often struggles with.’

Speaking of the Church of England, Revd Jo said:

*'The Church has become so much a part of the establishment that people can easily forget that there is a great tradition of people of faith speaking truth to power, even when there is a personal cost.'*²⁷⁰

Chelmsford

- In a letter from Rt Revd Stephen Cottrell (the Bishop of Chelmsford), he discusses a trip he took to Kenya and how he saw climate change impacting the country. However, he declares that it is not just Kenya being affected by climate change, but that the 'world is facing a climate emergency.'

He told the diocese that their 'faith tells us the world was created by God and that as part of that creation we have responsibilities for it', and concludes the letter with a list of events which people may wish to learn about, actions that people can take and resources that people may find useful.²⁷¹

- During an XR protest in London in October 2019, the Bishop of Chelmsford joined protestors in Trafalgar Square.²⁷²
- In October 2020, the Diocese of Chelmsford Synod voted to pass two motions in response to climate change. The first motion passed was for the diocese to move forward with the Church of England's target to become carbon neutral by 2030; and the second motion passed 'encourages parishes across Essex and East London to engage with the A Rocha Eco Church scheme and the Diocese to progress towards achieving ECO Diocese status.'²⁷³

Chester

- The Bishop of Chester, along with other faith leaders, campaign groups, businesses, and academics, wrote to Prime Minister Boris Johnson to urge him to ensure that long-term and interim targets for cutting plastic pollution are included in the Environment Bill.

Bishop Mark said that tougher environment law was important because '[b]y putting targets in place, written in law, together we can really begin to achieve something and change the way we're treating our planet.'²⁷⁴

- In a reflection published in *Chester Diocesan News*, Ian Bishop (the Archdeacon of Macclesfield) offered his thoughts on the issues facing the environment. He said that although 'hopes are high for progress in tackling the climate crisis' Christians 'must be at the forefront of change' because of the idea that life is a gift from God.

As a way to help tackle the environmental issues, the Archdeacon asked people to engage with reflections from the diocese and 'to draw close to the Bible again and get deeper into a text that is grounded in the gift of life' during Lent. He also encouraged people to take up challenges on the diocese website rather than giving something up for Lent.²⁷⁵

Chichester

- In a response to the Church of England's General Synod setting a target for all parts of the Church to become carbon net-zero by 2030, Revd Debbie Beer (the Diocese of Chichester's Environment Officer) expressed her support for the motion, calling it 'a great opportunity' in helping to tackle the climate crisis.

She also proposed a range of actions which churches and individuals could take. She said she 'would strongly encourage' people and churches to use the #LiveLent materials and read 'Saying Yes to Life', as well as urging churches to 'think seriously' about joining Eco Church.²⁷⁶

- As a response to the 'peril' of climate change, the Diocese of Chichester announced that they had committed to becoming an Eco Diocese and were encouraging the diocese's churches to become Eco Churches.²⁷⁷

Derby

- Following a presentation in June 2018 by the Environment group at the Derby Diocesan Synod, the Synod voted unanimously to become an Eco Diocese.²⁷⁸

Exeter

- In September 2019 the Holy Ground service at Exeter Cathedral was on 'Climate Emergency: Protesting For Change'. It was led by Canon Chris Palmer and included two guest speakers – a speaker from a youth-led climate activist group and an Exeter University professor.²⁷⁹

Gloucester

- On 1 February 2020, Gloucester Diocesan Synod voted to pass two motions. The first was to recognise that there is a climate and ecological emergency. The second motion passed was to call on all parts of the diocese to work towards an 80 per cent reduction of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases by 2030 – 20 years earlier than previously suggested – and to also take other measures to become carbon neutral by 2030.²⁸⁰

- Following the Diocesan Synod's motion to bring forward dates for reducing emissions, the Gloucester Diocesan Advisory Committee (DAC) released new policy and guidance regarding sustainability in church buildings – the first time the DAC has issued a formal policy. The DAC said it was seeking to encourage churches to use renewable energy sources.

Speaking of the DAC'S policy, Matt Fulford, the DAC Advisor for Energy and Sustainability, said: 'The climate crisis requires us all to take action to reduce our impact... and our churches cannot exclude themselves from being part of the required solution.'²⁸¹

- The Diocese of Gloucester have published their own Environmental Policy where they list a range of actions they plan to take in order to care for the environment. For instance, in their policy they commit to 'actively encourage PCCs to turn their churchyards into wildlife gardens' and managing 'diocesan investments ethically... being guided on climate change by the recommendations of the Ethical Investment Advisory Group'.²⁸²

Hereford

- In November 2020, over 90 church leaders and environmental activists across Herefordshire and South Shropshire met together online to lay out an environmental policy for the diocese to obtain Eco Diocese status by the end of 2021.

Talking to the those attending the online meeting, the Bishop of Hereford said:

'We can look at the issue of climate change and feel utterly paralysed by it, but people taking leadership and direction in

*local communities can really begin to turn things around. The cumulative effect of every action makes a significant difference to the overall impact.*²⁸³

Leeds

- Revd Jon Swales (Mission Priest at the Lighthouse Project, Leeds) and Revd Ruth Newton joined an XR protest in July 2019.

Discussing his involvement in the protest, Revd Jon said that he decided to get involved in the protest after ‘several months of deep reflection on the latest climate science and asking myself what allegiance to Jesus means in this context’. He also admitted that he was willing to face arrest if the police decided to clear the area.²⁸⁴

- In January 2021, St George’s (Leeds) demonstrated they were putting climate change at the forefront of their plans for 2021 when they announced that they were launching training programmes. The free programme of virtual sessions will run until July 2021 under three main strands: climate thinking, carbon detox and climate advocacy – with the aim of the sessions being ‘to help take individuals and churches on a journey of learning, prayer and action, preparing people to confront the climate crisis head on.’²⁸⁵

Leicester

- In 2019, members of the Leicester Diocesan Synod unanimously voted to register the diocese to work towards achieving a bronze award in the Eco Diocese scheme within two years. The motion was proposed by the Diocesan Environmental Officer (Revd Andrew Quigley), who said that the diocese should take these

steps as ‘a response to the ecological crisis and to live out our faith in God as a loving creator.’

In an address to the Diocesan Synod before the vote, the Bishop of Leicester stated that he ‘strongly’ supports the proposal to become an eco-diocese and believes that it should be made ‘a priority within the life of the diocese.’ He also spoke of the involvement of young people in the climate change movement and expressed his hope that ‘younger people here with us today will speak out confidently about their views and the rest of us will listen and take to heart what they say.’²⁸⁶

- On 5 September 2020, young people from churches in Leicester and Leicestershire hosted a virtual climate conference. In the event’s description in the diocese’s calendar, it was stated that the hope of the event was to start a conversation in churches and show ‘why it’s so crucial Christians should be part of the fight against the effects of the climate crisis.’²⁸⁷

Lichfield

- In his pastoral letter for June 2019, the Bishop of Lichfield posed the question: ‘What is our Christian response to this climate emergency, which threatens the very sustainability of God’s good creation?’, as well as praising former Archbishop Rowan Williams showing his support for XR.

In addition, the Bishop said: ‘Each of us should be reviewing our own capacity to voice our own care and concern for God’s world, alongside making the lifestyle changes that enact that concern,’ such as proposing that those in the diocese could give up meat and reduce their consumption of consumer goods.²⁸⁸

- In September 2019, rallies were held in Lichfield as part of the Global Climate Strike. As part of the campaign hundreds of school children and teachers took part in a service at Lichfield Cathedral where they voiced their concerns about climate change and planted wooden lollipop sticks outside the cathedral.

The Bishop of Wolverhampton (Rt Revd Clive Gregory – Lichfield Diocese’s lead on environmental matters) said it was ‘wonderful to see so many people at the cathedral and in churches across our diocese leading calls for climate justice.’²⁸⁹

- For the 2019 Selwyn Lecture at Lichfield Cathedral, the Bishop of Sheffield (Rt Revd Dr Pete Wilcox) addressed climate change – referring to it as ‘the biggest challenge of our age’. He also gave a two-part theological reflection on Genesis 1 and 2 in the light of the climate crisis to those in attendance.

The Bishop of Lichfield (Rt Revd Dr Michael Ipgrave) also spoke at the cathedral, discussing the action being taken in the Diocese of Lichfield to tackle climate breakdown.

Additionally, both Bishops commended the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Lent Book for 2020, ‘Saying Yes To Life’ by Ruth Valerio.²⁹⁰

- In March 2019, the Diocese of Lichfield released their Environmental Policy. In the policy they include a list of practical steps which the diocese plans to do to care for the environment, such as managing their investments ethically, building up a team of environmental officers and forming/developing relationships with other organisations to demonstrate the wider significance of environmental action.²⁹¹

- The Diocese of Lichfield called on churches to get involved with Climate Action Day on 20 September 2019 as a form of solidarity with those taking a stand. Clergy and diocesan staff were asked to ‘step aside’ from their usual duties in order to participate on the day.²⁹²
- In March 2020, the Diocese of Lichfield released their Diocesan Environmental Action Plan. The plan itself includes a list of practical steps which the diocese aims to do; the action of the different departments in the diocese in response to the policy; and the missions of the diocese in different areas, such as travel and heating.²⁹³
- Revd Andy McCosh rewrote some lyrics to the hymn ‘All Things Bright and Beautiful’ to reflect the realities of global warming as a way to get the message across from the Church’s perspective.

He wrote it for use in an environment and creation-focused service of Morning Praise and decided to forward a copy to Bishops in the diocese. The Bishops believed Revd Andy’s changes to the hymn were ‘topical and relevant’, and so he was asked to record a short video of the hymn being sung – which he did with some pupils from a local school.

New lyrics to the hymn include:

*‘The storms are getting greater;
The floods grow huge and strong.
We can’t leave things till later,
As we don’t have that long!’²⁹⁴*

Lincoln

- The Diocese of Lincoln and the University of Lincoln announced they were hosting a conference ‘that seeks to

navigate ways that science and the church can be leaders, both in caring for creation and measuring the effectiveness of our actions.’²⁹⁵

Liverpool

- The Bishop of Liverpool, Paul Bayes, read from Revelation when he joined XR protestors in Trafalgar Square in October 2019.

In a tweet after the protest, Bishop Paul said Christian protesters were ‘remembering our hope in Jesus in a dark time, standing in solidarity with those of all faiths and none who see the terrible urgency of our situation as a planet’.²⁹⁶

London

- In a letter to members of the diocese, Bishop Sarah listed a few ways in which individuals and churches could take action in response to climate change. She encouraged churches to open their doors so that people could come together to pray and reflect during the two weeks of action by XR in October 2019, though she also encouraged individuals to protest peacefully and legally if they felt comfortable doing so.²⁹⁷
- On the Diocese of London website, it says it had ‘first adopted the ‘Shrinking the Footprint’ campaign in 2006, and continues a committed supporter and advocate of the national CoE Environment Programme.’

To demonstrate their commitment to caring for the environment they also list a range of ways how the diocese is taking action, such as promoting the care of wildlife in churchyards and reducing the carbon footprint

of churches in the diocese by 21.7 per cent between 2005-2018.²⁹⁸

- On 12 March 2020, London's Diocesan Synod adopted their Environmental Policy which lists a number of actions that the diocese plan to take, including: 'target reductions in energy use in our buildings will be 25% by 2025, 30% by 2030 and 40% by 2040, from our original baseline of 2005'; encouraging churches and constituents 'to offset residual emissions through an efficient approved greenhouse gas offsetting scheme'; and encouraging the increasing use of 'churches as centres of refuge and support in times of climate, environmental and societal crisis.'²⁹⁹
- Brian Cuthbertson, the Head of Environment and Sustainability at the Diocese of London, wrote an article for the diocese entitled 'Responsible choices on climate change'. In the article he says: 'Climate change has become massively urgent, widely described as an emergency. And it will continue to be, in a year, five years, fifty years', and so '[w]e can't blame others. We can't pass the buck. The time is now. The choices rest with us.' Accordingly, he discusses different areas of life where action can be taken to reduce environmental impact, such as asking: 'can we look for ways to reduce our personal footprint from air travel, seeking more sustainable solutions whenever available?'³⁰⁰

Manchester

- The Diocese of Manchester established a 12-week Ecology and Creation training pathway for Authorised Lay Ministers in which they will develop 'a theological understanding of creation care alongside the climate emergency, and identify how creation and ecology

present missional opportunities for engagement in all aspects of church life'.³⁰¹

Newcastle

- In November 2020, the Diocese of Newcastle published their Environmental policy, 'framed in the context of the current climate crisis and ecological crisis.' The policy lists eight aims for the diocese in regards to caring for the environment, including challenging and encouraging 'businesses and all levels of government to meet the IPCC's carbon reduction target.'³⁰²

Norwich

- In an article for *Network Norfolk*, Revd Andy Bryant argued that there is a more fundamental issue than climate change which should be addressed: 'how as human beings can we learn to live in harmony and co-operation with each other?'

Whilst Revd Andy believes that XR is right in their view that we are in a time of crisis and is pleased that 'the issue of climate change seems to be getting the attention it needs', he contends:

*'unless we humans can learn to reach out to one another, break down the barriers that too easily divide us and build a new consensus across the global community, then I fear all that will be left from these current protests is not rebellion but just extinction.'*³⁰³

- On 10 October 2020, 100 Diocesan Synod members had a virtual meeting and voted overwhelmingly to pass a motion declaring 'a biodiversity and climate emergency'. The motion also recognised that there will be a

‘devastating impact’ from ‘volatile and extreme weather’ on the diocese’s food production, water availability and public health.

Additionally, by approving the motion, the diocese thereby declared that they would commit ‘to producing an attainable, costed, timed and outcome focused strategy for our care for creation as part of the delivery of the Diocesan Vision.’³⁰⁴

- Graham Usher, the Bishop of Norwich, was appointed to lead the Church of England’s Environment Programme by the Archbishop of Canterbury. Commenting on his appointment Bishop Graham said: ‘Responding to the climate and biodiversity crises that the planet faces is not a luxury in the ministry of the Church but an urgent imperative for our mission.’³⁰⁵

Oxford

- On 14 March 2020, the Oxford Diocesan Synod voted overwhelmingly to support a motion which declares a climate emergency and commits the diocese to a wide-ranging plan of practical action, prayer and advocacy.³⁰⁶
- In a blog on the Diocese of Oxford website the Bishop of Oxford, Rt Revd Steven Croft, said that he was going to meet with other campaigners to march and lobby MPs, urging them to take more action on the environment because we are currently being ‘complicit in the creation of an environmental catastrophe’.³⁰⁷
- On 6 February 2020, Bishop Steven addressed the House of Lords during a debate on the motion: ‘That this House takes note, further to the report by UK FIRES, Absolute Zero, published in November 2019, of technological and

lifestyle efforts (1) to address climate change, and (2) to meet the 2050 net zero carbon emissions target’.

Speaking in the debate, Bishop Steven referred to the current situation regarding the climate as an ‘emergency’ and said it was ‘the responsibility of every family, workplace, village, town and city, company and public institution’ to respond to it. He therefore called on the government to:

‘provide clear and ambitious policy signals, as they have just done with petrol and diesel vehicles, and to invite every institution and organisation to engage in this great question of our day so that the leadership we offer to the COP summit is demonstrably grounded in the trinity of policy intervention, technology solutions and changing the lives of our entire population.’³⁰⁸

- On 20 June 2019, Bishop Steven addressed the House of Lords in a debate on the motion: ‘that this House takes note of the case for better protecting and representing the interests of future generations in policy-making.’

Speaking in the debate, Bishop Steven said that because of the impact humanity is having on the environment – referring to the world as ‘living through a deepening environmental catastrophe’ – all future generations should be protected in policy-making and debate.³⁰⁹

- During summer 2020, the Diocese of Oxford published their *Pathways* magazine, with the title of the issue being ‘Time to act on the climate emergency’.

The magazine explored the topic of climate change in a number of different ways. In particular, there was a section entitled ‘Climate Emergency’ where the actions of the diocese were discussed and 10 different

recommendations were given as to how individuals and churches could help to care for the environment.³¹⁰

- The Diocese of Oxford have their own Environment Action Programme following the Oxford Diocesan Synod vote in March 2020 that declared a climate emergency and committed the diocese to a 2035 target for net-zero carbon emissions.

The programme provides support for change and awareness-raising amongst the clergy, parishes, schools, families and individuals in the diocese – with the focus on the diocese achieving its environmental commitments and being a voice for climate justice. It is stated the two overall main goals of the programme are: working towards achieving net-zero carbon emissions in church buildings, clergy housing and Church schools; and achieving a collective transformation around responding to the climate emergency.³¹¹

Portsmouth

- Volunteers from St Helen's Church have received an award because of their focus on the environment. The church has done a variety of things for the environment, such as planting trees, buying eco-friendly products and having 'Eco-Communion' once a month.³¹²
- Villagers also meet once a month for an Eco-Church service which includes a few minutes of informal worship with an environmental theme, a practical task that helps sustainable living, and a shared ethical meal. The vicar of St Helen's Church, Revd Ali Morley, said that the villagers gather to develop their love for nature and to 'take some practical steps in response to the global climate emergency.'³¹³

- The Bishop of Portsmouth joined the former Archbishop (Rowan Williams), other bishops, peers and MPs to pray for the environment outside the Houses of Parliament as part of a global prayer chain.³¹⁴

Rochester

- Dr Ruth Valerio was installed as Canon Theologian at Rochester Cathedral. Commenting on her appointment, Dr Ruth said she was looking forward to helping the diocese develop its work on the environment. She said:

*'We are facing an unprecedented climate emergency and we all have a calling to be part of the solution and to care for God's earth, remembering we are not living for ourselves, but are part of a wider body of humanity and the natural world.'*³¹⁵

St Edmundsbury and Ipswich

- In preparation for the UN global climate change talks in November 2021, the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich is encouraging churches to do one or more of three things: to hold a climate-focused service 'to explore the theological and scientific basis of creation care and action on climate, to pray, and to commit to action'; to make a commitment within the local community to take long-term action to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions; and to add its name to a 'call for the UK government to take much bolder action on climate change in this country in advance of COP26, and to strengthen its credibility to lead the international community to adopt a step change in action at COP26.'³¹⁶
- The Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich's Environment Policy includes a list of how the diocese aims to incorporate caring for the environment, such as

encouraging ‘collaboration with local and national green organisations seeking similar aims’ and attempting to reduce carbon emissions.³¹⁷

Salisbury

- In October 2019, Revd Hilary Bond and Revd Canon Jonathan Herber joined XR protestors on Lambeth Bridge to peacefully protest and pray. Both were arrested during the protest, along with other protestors, but later released without charge.

Speaking of their decision to join protestors, Revd Jonathan said he had spent 20 years writing to MPs about the effects of climate change but felt as though nothing had changed and so he ‘felt called to take to the streets and peacefully demonstrate’ despite knowing an arrest was possible. Revd Hilary also said she realised writing letters and signing petitions were ‘no longer enough’ and therefore decided to join the protests.³¹⁸

- During a debate in the House of Lords on the motion: ‘this House takes note of Her Majesty’s Government’s legal responsibility to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as detailed in the Climate Change Act 2008 and the implications of continuing climatic changes for global security and stability and for the world economy’ on 2 May 2019, the Bishop of Salisbury addressed the House.

Speaking in the debate, Bishop Nicholas highlighted that the world is experiencing a ‘climate emergency’ and called some of the Government’s decisions ‘hard to comprehend’ in light of the emergency.

To help combat climate change, Bishop Nicholas stated that he believed a ‘more coherent approach to energy’

was needed, as well as ‘joined-up thinking and action’ and ‘policy formation that provides a framework in which individuals make good choices.’³¹⁹

- In November 2019, Salisbury Diocesan Synod voted unanimously to pass a motion declaring a climate emergency. Commenting on the vote, the Bishop of Salisbury, Nicholas Holtam, said he was ‘glad’ that the Diocesan Synod had ‘recognised the climate emergency.’³²⁰
- To mark the end of the first half of the London Climate Action week in 2020, representatives from faith groups, including the Bishop of Salisbury, signed an open letter to the UK Government urging them to ensure that the economic recovery strategy following the coronavirus pandemic is centred around the need to reduce the impact of climate change.³²¹
- At the start of two weeks of planned protests by XR in 2019, the Bishop of Salisbury spoke out on behalf of the Church of England. In his speech he declared there was a ‘climate emergency’ and said: ‘We can do more, individually, as churches, dioceses and as a national church and will continue to develop ways to measure and reduce our carbon impacts, while promoting biodiversity.’ Additionally, whilst he said that the Church ‘supports the cause, and the right for peaceful protest’, he stressed that ‘it does not advocate activity which breaks the law.’³²²
- The Bishop of Salisbury addressed the Prime Minister’s statement pledging 68 per cent cuts in emissions by 2030. Bishop Nicholas said that the Prime Minister’s targets were ‘very welcome’, but that the UK was ‘also failing to meet important targets’ and he hoped ‘the pandemic

is teaching us the importance of global collaboration in response to a shared crisis in our common home.’³²³

- On 4 March 2017 the Diocesan Synod approved the Diocese of Salisbury’s Environment Policy. In the policy they list seven things which the diocese commits itself to, including providing ‘examples, materials and encouragement to parish Churches to engage with broader aspects of their environmental and ethical practice’, and supporting the National Shrinking the Footprint team in their targets to reduce carbon emissions.³²⁴
- St Paul’s Church held an event on 30 March 2019 called ‘One Small Step’ – which was organised by the Eco Church group at the church. The group’s Director of Operations, Nick Baker, said that it was ‘clear God’s creation is in crisis’ and so the focus was ‘on the small steps we can all take to make a real difference.’

Additionally, because the event coincided with the World Wildlife Fund’s Earth Hour, the church also said that they would turn their lights off for one hour in support of curbing climate change.³²⁵

Sheffield

- During a Diocesan Synod meeting on 28 November 2020, the Diocese of Sheffield voted to declare a climate and ecological emergency.³²⁶
- In a letter to members of the Diocese of Sheffield from Jo Chamberlain (on behalf of the Diocesan Environment Working Group), she spoke on a range of matters involving the environment and what individuals and churches can do to help. For instance, she linked to a resource which would help churches ‘move away from

spending on and investing in fossil fuel’, as well as telling members of the diocese that now was the time to talk to your local MP and councillors ‘about how we respond to the climate crisis’.³²⁷

Sodor and Man

- When climate change activists gathered outside the Manx parliament building in September 2019 as part of a global climate strike, an XR flag was raised at Peel Cathedral to show support for the strike action.

The Cathedral Dean, Very Revd Nigel Godfrey, said he ‘enthusiastically’ supported the student-led protests, and added that staff at the cathedral recognised the ‘moral duty to speak out’ and to ‘leave an abundant and thriving planet for future generations’.³²⁸

- The Diocese of Sodor and Man is a member of the island’s Climate Change Coalition³²⁹ – a group formed to lobby the government over the ‘biggest threat to the welfare of all’.³³⁰
- On 2 March 2020 the Diocesan Synod of the Diocese of Sodor and Man voted to adopt a motion which declares that there is a climate emergency and states that the diocese aspires to be carbon net zero by 2030.³³¹

Southwark

- On 7 October 2019, Revd Helen from the Diocese of Southwark was one of over 270 people to be arrested during an XR protest in London.³³²
- In April 2019, Revd Helen Burnett took part in XR protests in London. During the protest she slept in a tent at the Marble Arch site. She also organised a foot-washing

action on Maundy Thursday for protestors and members of the public to have their feet bathed with water and oils.

Discussing her reason for taking part in the protests, Revd Helen said she was there as a follower of Christ. She said: 'Christ lived in a way that not only worked to expose the oppressive powers in society but oppose them', and that 'pushing for justice is a key theme throughout the gospels.'³³³

- On St John's Waterloo Church's website, Giles Goddard wrote a blog entitled 'Extinction Rebellion and why we are supporting it.' He said he was 'glad that St John's, Waterloo, is able to support Extinction Rebellion (XR) by offering a space in the crypt for rest and recuperation, and storing trees and plants for the action on Waterloo Bridge.'

Additionally, whilst Giles acknowledges in his blog that some of XR's actions are illegal, he says the challenge facing the environment 'is hard to overstate' and so he believes that 'XR's witness and action – and their thoughtful and careful approach – is vital for our time.'³³⁴

- On 12 March 2020, the Twitter account for XR UK shared a video of the Bishop of Southwark (Rt Revd Christopher Chessun) expressing his support for Christian Aid and the Faith Vigil for the Earth – a vigil that other members of the clergy in the diocese are also involved in supporting and sustaining.

In the video, Bishop Christopher can be seen attending the vigil and saying '[it is] so important that we do not remain silent or invisible about climate injustice because the impact of this on future generations is so significant.'³³⁵

Truro

- Two Cornish churches – Warleggan and St Just – began a campaign of bell ringing in the summer of 2019 to draw attention to the climate emergency. At Warleggan, the church bells were tolled 12 times before services to represent the years the world has left to be able to stabilise the levels of atmospheric carbon dioxide. Whilst at St Just, the ringers began chiming the bells for half an hour on significant days, putting up banners and flags, handing out leaflets and talking to members of the public who were curious about why the bells were ringing.

The Bishop of Truro, Rt Revd Philip Mounstephen, said the parishes have his ‘enthusiastic support’. He said:

‘Church bells have often been sounded down the ages to communicate an imminent threat to the community. Right now we are faced with the clear and present danger of the climate emergency and we must all act fast.’³³⁶

- On 22 February 2019, the Bishop of Truro spoke of the General Synod’s decision to pass a motion on climate change which, among other things, calls on the General Synod to ‘[r]ecognise the escalating threat to God’s Creation from climate change and the suffering caused, particularly to the poor’.

Bishop Philip was in favour of the motion brought to the General Synod and said their passing of the motion:

‘sends an unequivocal message that the Church of England believes it must act on climate change – not just to all members of the church in this country, but it also signifies our commitment to taking action to our brothers and sisters in other parts of the world where the effects have been, and will continue to be, quite catastrophic.’³³⁷

- Luci Isaacson (Environmental Officer for the Diocese of Truro and part of Climate Vision) visited St George's in Truro and Holy Commotion to raise awareness of what individuals can do to help care for the environment. During the talk, 10 pledges were suggested to the congregation. Examples of the pledges included: buying local, seasonal produce as much as possible; working out their carbon footprint; and reduce holiday air miles by 50 per cent.

Discussing Luci's talk, Father Chris Epps said it 'had a positive impact on everybody. As Christians, we are stewards of God's earth and should take seriously our responsibilities to look after it.'³³⁸

Conclusion

This report set out to investigate the scale of support for radical agendas alleging ‘systemic racism’ in English society, rehabilitating ‘unconscious biases’ and prescribing a ‘climate emergency’ doctrine within the Church of England. Its analysis began by simply examining the reported instances of clergy involvement in campaign messages which supported their faith in those doctrines across the 42 dioceses. By observing and recording the involvement of the appointed Bishops, vicars, Rectors, ministers or other clergy in those campaigns – particularly since the rise of radical protest groups and diversity training campaigns over the past two years – we found that some measurement could be made of the clergy-adopted progressivist values within each diocese.

By measuring the reported instances, articles, statements and reports alleging types of ‘systemic racism’ in English society, or rehabilitating ‘unconscious biases’ or prescribing a ‘climate emergency’ doctrine, either through Church events or through Church-affiliated websites and across media outlets relating to each Diocese, a record can be made of how the leadership and clergy within the various regional Dioceses are approaching the adoption of ultra-progressive agendas, which frequently lack evidence to support claims to racism at a systemic level or ‘unconscious biases’ (which by their very nature are unprovable) or indeed on what constitutes a ‘climate emergency’.

The unqualified reception of unchallenged ideas is not specific to the Church – it is rather symptomatic of what is happening throughout UK civic society and depends upon telling reasonable citizens they must comply with those narratives in order to survive in society. In places of education, local authorities, universities, broadcast media, the arts, the police, and all those entities that were once described as the ‘little platoons’ in regular society are failing to scrutinise, check, or provide leadership to novel activists with often dangerously ill-conceived popular ideas that lack evidence. There is a common denominator of leadership acquiescence or a particular vulnerability among leaders about their approach to society, ordinary human values and a laziness in objecting to questionable claims and narratives, often to appease relentless and large-scale agitators.

The ‘Lament to Action’ report³³⁹ – and the deepening crisis

To realise one aspect of this new worldview of ultra-progressivism, the Church of England established the Anti-Racism Taskforce in autumn last year. As the evidence in this report shows, ultra-progressivism had already been captured by the policies and missional objective of dozens of dioceses. What the Taskforce, and its subsequent report, ‘From Lament to Action’, tried to achieve was some kind of structural coherence to these ideas and perspectives through an internal, top-down reform of the Church.

On the day of its publication the Taskforce was keen to make clear that its report was not designed by identity politics or intended as a move in the ‘culture wars’. Instead, the Taskforce said it was motivated ‘not from identity politics but from our identity in Christ.’ This perspective was reinforced in the report itself, which made clear that:

'Our work is not a battle in a culture war but rather a call to arms against the evil and pernicious sin of racism. Our mandate flows not from identity politics but from our identity in Christ.... [It is from this perspective] that we find the reason and motivation to combat racism'.³⁴⁰

But while the Taskforce report makes clear that this is not a contribution to identity politics or the culture war, its recommendations look familiar to what other vulnerable institutions have adopted in recent years. It proclaims the purpose of this report was to fulfil a Christian idea that 'all men are created equal in the image of God', but in fact, its recommendations are very similar to what else has happened across British institutions. The key policies it intends to pursue include increasing the representation of UK Minority Ethnic (UKME) individuals, internal reform through multiplying diversity bureaucrats, and a new approach to education.

As Marc Sidwell (2020) earlier noted in his book, *The Long March: How the left won the culture war and what to do about it*, the established Church, the BBC and the civil service, who adhere to a set of 'progressive' ideas for what they claim will lead to a more equal society through government intervention, are in the ascendant and set the terms of most of our public debate.³⁴¹ He finds that the power to shape an institution's agenda is a type of power without accountability, and can therefore be immense.³⁴² His observation that the phrase 'culture war' comes from the German *Kulturkampf* of the late nineteenth century – a fight between the Prussian state and the Catholic Church for control of educational appointments, reflects that the control of educational institutions tends to be a key battlefield in the culture war since it offers the chance to 'shape the minds of entire generations'.³⁴³ In that context, it is notable the Church

has such an immense power to shape a public discourse not only for itself but in its schools and wider society.

According to the 'Lament to Action' Report, increasing the representation of UKME groups in the Church's institutions is the single most important reason for change. The Report makes this view clear when it says:

*'...the Taskforce supports the Archbishop of Canterbury's contention that there is institutional racism in the church's practices and structures. This can be seen clearly in a number of areas of church life, most strikingly in the areas of participation and representation as well as in areas of structures and governance.'*³⁴⁴

The necessity for this, the Taskforce says, is the fact that only two UKME people in the last 27 years have held senior positions in the Church of England: Bishop Michael Nazir-Ali and John Sentamu. On John Sentamu's retirement in June 2020, the Report says 'for the first time in over a quarter of a century, there was no UKME/GMH diocesan bishop serving in the Church of England.'³⁴⁵ This, it goes on, 'underlines the need to bring about a change to the current culture, custom and practices of the Church where not all God's people are seen to be treated equally.'³⁴⁶

To resolve this problem, the Taskforce report recommends the implementation of a new style of recruitment based upon shortlists, effectively quotas, to promote ethnic minority individuals into more senior positions in the Church. These include shortlists for bishops and senior roles to include those from minority ethnic backgrounds, ethnic representation in all its governing bodies, and for its Strategic Leadership Development Programme for future leaders to include 30 per cent representation of ethnic minorities 'to build up pipe-line supply' for senior leadership in the Church.'³⁴⁷

Shortlists and quotas for ethnic minorities have rightly

been criticised over several years for their failure to achieve anything beneficial. This tokenism is long said to patronise candidates by implying that they are only represented on shortlists because of the colour of their skin rather than their ideas or commitment to an institution. They also serve to only reinforce stereotypes that people may have of ethnic minorities by suggesting that they are not capable of senior roles without a 'leg up' from institutions. But the introduction of shortlists and quotas are significant for the Church of England, in that it represents an increasing focus on recruiting certain types of individuals based upon their immutable characteristics rather than those most committed to the ideas and practices of Christianity.

Importantly, to ensure that such diversity quotas and shortlists are realised, internal governance reforms proposed in the Taskforce report have a crucial role to play. The 'Lament to Action' report makes dozens of recommendations to increase office holders in the Church of England. For example, it calls for the establishment of a Racial Justice Directorate³⁴⁸ to ensure the Taskforce's recommendations are implemented, such as by supporting Racial Justice Officers³⁴⁹ in the dioceses and holding permanent representation on the Archbishop's Council. Racial Justice Officers, it is proposed, should be established and located in the dioceses as the 'arms' of the Taskforce, with the responsibility of ensuring said targets on diversity are met by sending annual reports on recruitment to the Racial Justice Directorate.

The Taskforce report also calls for a new collective approach to anti-racism bureaucracy, arguing 'the processes of data gathering and diversity monitoring must be seen not so much as the choice of the individual, but as the task of the whole Church, if we are to make genuine progress with

participation.’³⁵⁰ It argues more data will help to identify ‘good practice to see what works’, and so believes it to be important that a new culture is created ‘where supplying data is seen as beneficial’.³⁵¹ This is because it wants to see all racial diversity data monitoring mandatory in future application processes.³⁵²

There are several transformations taking place which revolve around the proposed multiplication of bureaucrats in the Taskforce’s report. In Critical Race Theory, now adopted across multiple public narratives, it is implied that there is a perpetual or inevitable conflict of interest between white people and anyone else. But professionals, in practice, play a unique role in this imagined conflict between oppressor and oppressed, as they constitute a ‘third party’ capable of ‘managing’ these apparent conflicts. The diversity professionals, then, considering themselves neither oppressor or oppressed, are seen as able to ‘rise above’ this conflict and ensure problems do not arise. This makes data monitoring crucial, as data, once collected, creates an anonymous perspective of the individual who is perceived as a number rather than a person, further accentuating the importance of the bureaucrat in seeing these conflicts ‘from above’ and managing them.

Crucially, new offices inside the Church will also give it a new lease of life and meaning. Rather than strive in mission for a public that is committed to the morals and principles of Christianity, office-holders have new responsibilities as the agents of social change and racial justice, however it might be described or evidenced. This is most clearly seen with the application of Unconscious Bias Training, and more widely in the aims of education in this report.

The Taskforce’s own report makes clear that education has a unique role in society:

'Since knowledge is power and access to knowledge is often through education opportunities, the following proposals are made with two key objectives in mind: achieving societal change, and transformation within the church towards racial justice and equity'.³⁵³

Except for the words 'the church', this perspective of education could be applied to any institution in the UK that is now interested in pursuing racial justice as it is now commonly understood. The idea that 'knowledge is power' has become a common but vulgar expression that stems from ultra-progressivism. From this perspective, the idea that education can and should 'cultivate character' is perceived as dangerous, as characters formed in this society become either dangerous oppressors or guilty victims of racism. Moreover, the omission of the word 'bible' in the Taskforce's understanding of a Christian education, with a focus instead on 'racial justice and equity', may not be deliberate, but certainly has implications for the way the Taskforce sees the Church as an institution embedded in British society.

The Taskforce recommends the Church adopt a new approach to education. This includes, for example, online learning programmes in anti-racism learning³⁵⁴ (similar, it says, to previous work done on 'safeguarding'); producing an anti-racism handbook³⁵⁵ to be distributed to local dioceses; adopting Black History Month³⁵⁶ in the Church's calendar; introducing Black Theology³⁵⁷ as a module in the curriculum of the Church; Racial Justice Sunday³⁵⁸ once a year, with educational materials produced by the Archbishop's adviser on Minority Ethnic Affairs; and the wider use Unconscious Bias Training³⁵⁹ across all levels of the Church.

It is hard to see where the teachings of the Bible, or any aspect of spirituality related to the Church's history over half a millennium, fits into this perspective of education.

If the Church continues to follow this path towards ultra-progressivism it will only set itself up for further decline. No one can doubt the diminished influence of the Church in twenty-first century Britain. Despite this, leaders inside the Church are flawed in their judgment if they are to embrace the questionable assertions of ultra-progressivism and its claim to improve the spiritual wellbeing of the nation. The Church cannot end all racism or solve climate change. Yet the 'Lament to Action' report repeatedly reminds the reader that there are 'missional opportunities' to be gained from such reforms.

The problem with this view is that the closer the Church is to these momentary issues and campaigns, the more likely it is to rise and fall – as such campaigns inevitably do. It is then left in the awkward position of being forced to defend those who are only temporarily interested in supporting it with just a personal interest in faith – and treating as enemies those who still cherish it. These people may appear at first sight to be 'white, male and stale', but they are usually the very people who donate and give up their time the most for their church to flourish. By associating itself with these knee-jerk protests or campaigns – which are always short lived – the Church risks being kicked out of the lives of people it relies on the most.

The lack of leadership and directionless approach in adopting new ideologies

The Church is but one of a set of national institutions that have adopted radical agendas that are making them increasingly unrecognisable to the reasonable people who attend – and a consequent separation of the head from the body that nourishes, supports and holds it up. The leadership is frequently out of touch with the grassroots memberships

and ordinary members of society. Their narratives are derived from radicalised groups who speak only for a very small minority in society. The notion of a 'civic society' is rotting from the head and the body doesn't understand the words, actions and meaning that are supposed to connect with it.

This impact has only been exacerbated during the pandemic – with church closures accelerating in response to the spread of Covid-19 across the population. The closures alarmed parishioners who saw the Church as their lifeline, and has been coupled with the recognisable deterioration in leadership, destroying its reputation and credibility with an unquestioned adoption of antagonistic and undesirable ideas that serve neither society nor the Church.

The attitudinal position towards ultra-progressiveness and the difficult position that leaves many of the population reflects the high regard that so many hold of the Church, even though so few now attend their local churches or claim to be Christians. It is a counterintuitive observation, but the institution is among the foremost in England's national landscape. It is central to the evolution of the constitution, our laws, history, architecture, landscape, place names, Christian names, music, language and our culture.

In short, the Church's importance in civic society goes well beyond its regular membership – it is central to how our society has come to be 'what it is' and it informs many citizens of how we seek to approach changes and challenges in our everyday lives. The Queen is its Supreme Governor; the bishops have a constitutional role in the Upper House; we have Church schools in every community; we take holidays at Easter, Whitsun, Allhallows and Christmas; our calendar is based on 2021 years since the birth of Christ. We simply cannot understand the formation and current

CONCLUSION

assembly of the English nation and the wider UK without understanding the role of Christianity and the Church. In that light, given the way in which the Archbishop leadership and clergy within the various regional Dioceses are approaching the adoption of ultra-progressive agendas – which do not seem to be supported by evidence to support claims to racism at a systemic level or ‘unconscious biases’ (which by their very nature are unprovable), or indeed on what constitutes a ‘climate emergency’ – some attention is needed to ensure future resilience of the Church in an age of deeply politicised combative appeals to radical campaign objectives.

Notes

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- 342 Sidwell, p. 14.
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- 347 See 'Participation' section of 'Lament to Action' for these policies, especially p. 23.
- 348 In the 'Structures and Governance' section of the Report (p. 48.):
 "Create a Racial Justice Directorate within the NCIs consisting of a minimum of three full time posts of Director, Senior Officer and administrative support. This unit should be funded for a five-year fixed term basis in the first instance. The role of the Directorate will be to implement the recommendations of the Taskforce and the Commission, and to support regional justice officers in their work with dioceses and parishes."
- 349 In the 'Structures and Governance' section of the Report (p. 49.): "Appoint full time diocesan Racial Justice Officers (RJO) in every diocese for a fixed five year term. The role of the RJO will be to implement the recommendations of the Taskforce and the Commission at a local level, and to support the diocese and parishes in devising and implementing diocesan racial justice strategies."
- 350 'From Lament to Action', p. 20.
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- 359 In the 'Training and Mentoring' section of the Report (p. 39.):
 "Develop a mandatory three-stage learning programme...
 Unconscious bias".

CIVITAS

Director: David Green

Trustees

- Meg Allen
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This report on radical progressive activism in the Church of England serves as a broader wake up call to set about restoring leadership into our civic institutions that not only understands their central purpose but regains the trust and support of the British public they serve.

In this research, Jim McConalogue, Rachel Neal and Jack Harris have set out to investigate the scale of support for ultra-progressive radical activist agendas alleging ‘systemic racism’ in English society, the understanding and use of ‘unconscious biases’ and prescribing a ‘climate emergency’ doctrine within the Church of England.

By surveying the growing adoption of ultra-progressive values by the Church of England, the research examines the reported instances of clergy involvement in campaign messages which supported those beliefs across the 42 dioceses of the Church.

This research finds that over 80 per cent of all Church dioceses appoint clergy who have promoted racial justice activist claims or expressed concerns for institutional or systemic racism. It further finds that over a quarter of all dioceses appoint clergy who appear very supportive of the use of unconscious bias training within the Church. And over 70 per cent of all dioceses appoint clergy who promote climate activist warnings or calls for recognition of a ‘climate emergency’.

As Tom Harris writes in the Foreword, this ‘complete departure from the Church’s central purpose risks making it unrecognisable to the grass roots members who support it’. It marks a ‘separation of the head from the body that is becoming alarmingly recognisable in so many of our national institutions’.

