

INSIGHTS FROM RACIAL JUSTICE CONFERENCE

Background

The conference started on Remembrance Day - 9th November, a day to commemorate all lives lost due to violence based on race and other related matters in Germany. The conference followed the policy framework of the diocese "Breathing Life" through God's Kaleidoscope – the Kingdom of God envisioned on earth as it is in heaven. The Kaleidoscopic vision indicates the realm of the kingdom vulnerabilities in life that matters more in building each other. This vision brings beauty from reconfiguring the discarded.

"Injustice takes the breath away"

Grieving the Past

Racism has multiple forms and can manifest in various ways. Grieving could be identified as the basis of new foundation for reconciliation and a just future where mistakes of the past would ideally be avoided. Stories of resilience, sorrows and fear were told, but most importantly stories of triumph, hope, and survival through reconciliation and forgiveness. Humility is required in order to accept these stories, experiences, and pains as we dream about a racially just future.

The colonial past experiences are rooted in the problems of today. It's important to acknowledge what went wrong and dare to dream of a racially just modern day living. It has been proven that there's tremendous healing power in telling own story in a safe supporting environment because when wounds are not healed, they play out in spaces that are very unlikely. In this case the church is trusted to provide that platform and learn to listen. The process of healing involves apologizing, forgiving, and reconciling.

The story of John the Baptist illustrated that Jesus got involved with different kind of people from different backgrounds. John was not part of the system of production, lived in the wilderness but Jesus went to him. John never represented his own interests. The key factors were: - born against the anti-kingdom, born again into the beloved community and borne by the spirit of freedom. When the trauma of race is cleansed, freedom is achieved.

The Challenge of the Present

Jesus didn't bring new religion but He brought new life.

History doesn't happen by accident, it affects our present and our future. Commemoration of atrocities in different parts of the world only acts as a turning point. The narrative of ignorance about racism is still alive today. This denial prevents the next generations' progress and prevents reconciliation. It is our responsibility to raise voices because silence is sometimes a triumph of discrimination.

Racial inequality cannot be isolated from other forms of inequalities such as economic inequality, gender inequality, religious/faith inequality as well as other different kinds of inequalities. The intersectionality can be adopted in addressing other forms of discrimination to achieve justice. Everyday lives are so racialized that structural systemic racism is a reality today.

In connecting this view was the story of the Canaanite woman was used in that she represented the people who were despised. She was a pagan from a cursed slave community but had great faith. Jesus redrew the boundaries of God's grace and mercy; the outsiders became part of the household of the kingdom. Love and justice are interconnected.

The way Forward

Racial justice should be based on freedom of learning and practicing the component of knowing who one is. All forms of healing and reconciliation should be interpreted from the gift of freedom. Believers should depend onto their faith that unites them and reject what is unacceptable while keeping the law.

It's time to unlearn what has been projected to us and make a deliberate attempt to overcome racial injustices. Some practical ways on achieving racial justice are:-

- Giving hope: - Know the limits at a personal level on what is achievable. Work from the bottom and give hope to the hopeless.
- Revision of policies and laws to accommodate racial injustices and how to deal with it.
- Compulsory training and general training to different church groups in order to create awareness.
- Discuss racism openly and acknowledge its existence.
- Strengthen the department of safeguarding in order to be able to deal with racial discrimination cases and perhaps introduce anonymous feedback forms for analysis.
- Increasing representation of the different races in church leadership.
- Rethinking the teachings especially to children and the youth. Achievable through use of art in challenging racial injustice.
- Eradicate unconscious bias for example in sharing of responsibilities.
- Practice distributive justice by sharing goods at a community level and advocating for an inclusive world through prayers.
- Integrity – It should be unacceptable that institutions operate as usual and fail to make fundamental changes in which they operate in, despite recommendations about eradicating racial injustice. Integrity in institutions and church in particular is necessary in its entirety since it would be viewed *as preaching water but failure to take responsibility, they would be drinking wine instead.*

Conclusion

From a basic level point of view, justice is justice regardless what form it takes. It should be directed by how we want to live within ethos of society and envisioning a good life. To have, we first need to hope and unlearn the ways we've done things before adopting the gospel way. Repent and turn around.

There were several commitments which were suggested among them the affirmation that there will be a continuing movement and campaign to ensure greater belonging and healing where each finds themselves welcomed by all, and all realize the importance of accepting each person as they are. The overall adopted statement of commitment was *"We dream that the daring dreams of our generation will be the reality of our children"*. – Diocese in Europe
<https://www.europe.anglican.org/news/latest-news/breathing-life-racial-justice-conference>