

## **Motion No.7**

**Proposer: Dr Lucy Michael**

### **Embargo Until Delivery • Check Against Delivery**

Archbishop, Bishops, Members of Synod,

I'm Lucy Michael of the Diocese of Dublin and Glendalough, and it is my pleasure to act as Secretary of the Primates Reference Group on Ethnic Diversity, Inclusion and Racial Justice.

Today I bring you a proposal with the support of the membership of that group. The motion proposes that each diocese hold a service each year marking Racial Justice Sunday in any Cathedral or parish church of their choosing. The intention of this motion is to show, right across the island, that we take seriously our role as Christians in addressing racism.

Racial Justice Sunday has a long history in the Church of Ireland, through Churches Together in Britain and Ireland. It was born in the Church of England in response to the racist murder of Stephen Lawrence in 1993 and the institutional failures that followed. Since then, it has become a space for repentance, reflection, and renewal – an annual opportunity to hear the voices of those who are too often unheard, and to reaffirm our baptismal calling to seek justice and peace. The themes explored each year are deeply relevant to our context – they consider how racism affects many different groups as well as the society as a whole. Last year's theme particularly looked at our responses to migration. Such a reflection asks us how we understand the image of God in each person, how we read Scripture, how we love our neighbour.

Here in Ireland, we are not exempt from the challenges of racism. Racial inequalities persist across many areas of life – in housing, employment, healthcare, and education. People from minority ethnic backgrounds experience higher levels of discrimination and lower levels of trust in public institutions. Racist hate crime and speech are increasing, particularly in public and online spaces. The Church must speak – and act.

We already have strong foundations. Some parishes, particularly in Northern Ireland, have long observed Racial Justice Sunday. In February 2025, St Patrick's Cathedral hosted the Church of Ireland's first central celebration, and the Liturgical Advisory Committee is now developing a Church-specific liturgy to be ready for our celebration in 2026. This is not the beginning – it is a next step.

Our own surveys confirm the urgency. The 2022 Church of Ireland survey on ethnic diversity commissioned by the Archbishop of Armagh, and the studies by Professor Anne Lodge for the Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough, show that racial injustice touches our own members, and

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that our members want to learn more about what we as Christians can do. And the Irish Council of Churches' 2022 survey also shows we are not alone – this is a shared concern across denominations.

There has been great support for recent work inside the Church to address diversity and inclusion, and I want to thank the many people who have helped that work along. But also looking outward is crucial because the Gospel is outward-facing. Jesus did not only teach in synagogues – he healed in the streets, dined with outsiders, challenged unjust systems. He called his followers to be salt and light – not just in the Church, but in the world. We are not separate from Irish society. We are part of it. As a Church with island-wide presence and moral authority, we are uniquely placed to speak – to model reconciliation, amplify marginalised voices, and offer a vision of community rooted in the dignity of every human being.

As Christians, our concern cannot end at the church door. Inclusion within is important, but it is incomplete without justice beyond. If we welcome people on Sunday but are silent about the racism they face on Monday, we offer comfort without solidarity. What happens 'out there' affects what happens 'in here'. Members of our Church live under the weight of inequality and exclusion every day. And when we ignore the suffering of one part of the body, the whole body is diminished. Racial Justice Sunday equips us to join our faith with action – not only to welcome, but to advocate, lament, and change.

This is not a distraction from mission – it is mission. As Anglicans, we affirm the Five Marks of Mission, which include transforming unjust structures of society and pursuing peace and reconciliation. That begins with awareness. It grows through education. And it takes root when we mark time together – visibly, publicly, liturgically. Racial Justice Sunday gives us that moment. It is a moment to shape our identity as Christians in a rapidly changing world.

It is my honour today to propose to you that we make it an annual moment – in every diocese, every year – so that our Church may become more deeply what it is called to be: a guiding light, a place of truth and healing, and a people of justice and love.