

The Oxford Journal for  
Intercultural Mission.

Issue four – Summer 2024

The logo for the Oxford Journal for Intercultural Mission (OJIM) is rendered in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters. The letters are set against a background of overlapping circles and squares in shades of maroon, orange, and cream. The 'O' is a simple circle, while the 'J' has a curved bottom. The 'I' is a simple vertical bar, and the 'M' has a classic serif-like shape with a central dip. The letters are slightly offset from each other, creating a layered effect.

OJIM

# ABOUT THE JOURNAL

*The Oxford Journal for Intercultural Mission* is a popular and easy-to-read journal published quarterly by St Paul's, Slough – the designated intercultural mission-resourcing hub in the Diocese of Oxford. Occasionally, a special issue will be published to mark or celebrate an event such as Race Equality Week, Black History Month or South Asian Heritage Month.

The journal will offer a range of reflections on issues impacting the growth of intercultural mission and ministry in the Church of England. These will include UKME (United Kingdom Minority Ethnic) and GMH (Global Majority Heritage) participation, governance structures, ministry discernment and training, racial justice, cultural awareness, preaching and evangelism.

We aim to provide a forum for bloggers, church planters, students, leaders, teachers, and preachers to share experiences, expertise, research, and intercultural mission tools to inspire a movement and growth of intercultural worshipping communities within the Church of England. Find us online at [oxford.anglican.org/ojim](http://oxford.anglican.org/ojim)

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## Requirements

### Articles

OJIM publishes articles that are 1500–1800 words (including endnotes and bibliography). Usually, the General Editor will invite a contributor to submit an article, giving them the theme for the issue and the deadline for submission. However, prospecting contributors to OJIM should submit articles by email to the General Editor to: [editorOJIM@stpaulsslough.org.uk](mailto:editorOJIM@stpaulsslough.org.uk)

OJIM is an easy-to-read journal. Therefore, articles use clear, concise English and consistently adopt UK spelling and punctuation conventions and one type of referencing throughout the article.

To ensure consistency of style in other areas, please contact the General Editor for style guidelines.

### Book Reviews

The General Editor selects the books to be reviewed and individuals to do the review. Even so, prospective reviewers may contact the General Editor suggesting a specific book to be reviewed or submitting a book review for consideration.

### Disclaimer

The opinions in any article published in this journal are the author's alone and do not necessarily represent the editors, St Paul's, Slough, or the Diocese of Oxford.

# INTRODUCTION BY THE EDITOR

**Guest Editor, Karamat Iqbal,** writes: This fourth issue of *The Oxford Journal for Intercultural Mission* focuses on South Asian Heritage Month (SAHM), observed every year from 18 July until 17 August. It was set up in 2019 to recognise and celebrate the contributions those communities have made to the UK.

Founding Patron of SAHM, Anita Rani, said: 'South Asian Heritage Month is about the next generation of kids growing up in the UK and for them to be able to feel empowered in their identity and proud of who they are.' How might we as a church respond to the needs of our South Asian communities?

I recently read an article in which a white church leader describes their congregation members being impacted by racism:

'After a sustained campaign of racial harassment, an Asian family, who were church members, suffered a violent assault in their home in the middle of the night. Three of the family members were admitted to hospital with serious injuries.'<sup>1</sup>

The church responded by becoming involved in a two-year campaign, not only for justice for the family, but to address systemic racism in societal structures. Not all churches would respond similarly to such racism, not because they are uncaring but because they may lack the underlying race literacy.

In 2017 I wrote *A Biography of the Word Paki*,<sup>2</sup> cataloguing the birth and life of this particular form of the abuse. I prepare to bring out Edition 6 of the publication, and no doubt further updates given that the abuse is constantly mutating. In my

view this is an area which church leaders and their congregations, especially from the white majority background, need to understand and engage with.

The articles in this issue provide examples of responses from across the church to the present and developing diversity. Our distinguished and diverse contributors have generously shared their valuable knowledge and perspectives. One writer has posed the question: How well equipped are we to communicate cross-culturally and to welcome those into our churches who come from different ethnic and religious backgrounds? In response it was stated: If we are to be relevant, we need to increase our cultural competence. It is our hope that the articles here will facilitate such competence, understanding of the issues involved, and challenge and inspire us in taking positive action towards our intercultural mission.

# THIS QUARTER

**Karamat Iqbal** opens the issue with a celebration of the South Asian Christian community. Starting with his own story – birth in Azad Kashmir in a Muslim community, arrival in the UK and conversion to Christianity – he provides the historical and present context of the South Asians in the church.

**Chris Binder** reminds us that over the past two hundred years the context for mission has changed significantly as the global church has grown. Three descriptors of mission can help as we navigate the changes: going, welcoming and journeying together. As we go and as we welcome, we should seek to develop relationships of genuine mutuality, learning from those who are not like us, if we are to more fully demonstrate the realities of God's kingdom to the watching world.

**Neil Masih** provides an autobiographical perspective in focusing on the culturally diverse church. He also features the experiences of two people from UKME/GMH backgrounds attending church, and how this has enriched their faith and brought them joy. He also provides insight into his work in the context of annual

dates such as South Asian Heritage Month and the Black History Month, as a way to celebrate the global church.

**Tim Chilvers** points out the superdiversity of his community, the city of Birmingham. His article explores some of the ways Riverside Church, that he leads, has tried to learn, adapt and grow as it aims to serve the city. In recent years, the church has made some conscious changes to better reflect its city, whilst trying to show the city the love of Christ.

**Martyn Snow** describes becoming more conscious of the significance of his Whiteness, the efforts within the Church of England to achieve greater racial justice, and the intercultural approach taken in the Diocese of Leicester. He lays out three principles to Intercultural Gift Exchange and three traits which undergird them, and which are crucial in addressing Whiteness in the Anglican Church – humility, de-centring and curiosity.

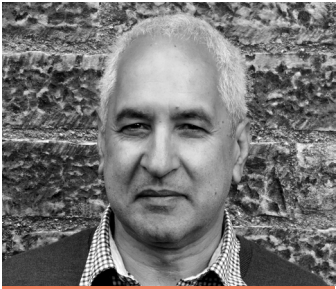
**Karamat Iqbal** reminds us of the diversity of our world, which is now a normal part of our lives both here in the UK and throughout the world. Given the linguistic

diversity amongst our fellow citizens and congregations, the question he poses is *How should the church respond; should the majority learn the minorities' languages?* He provides examples of those who have already taken this step.

**Azita Jabbari** points out that Christ-followers from Muslim backgrounds sometimes struggle to feel at home in British churches. She shares from her own story, and highlights the Joining the Family resource. This course is designed to help churches understand and respond to the needs of those in their midst from Muslim backgrounds, but also helps churches benefit from the blessing and gifts that these precious sisters and brothers bring.

**Nigel Rooms** outlines how the Diocese of Birmingham commissioned, developed and launched Two-way Street, an intercultural learning resource for churches. Some of the challenges of co-creating a resource in the world of intercultural church are explored. The approach and content of Two-way Street is explained, and this free resource is commended to the reader.

# CELEBRATING THE CHURCH'S SOUTH ASIAN HERITAGE



**Dr Karamat Iqbal** has a background in race equality and education over 50 years. He has a B.Ed and an MA in Race and Education. His research in the education of disadvantaged white children was used as the main text for a parliamentary debate. His doctoral research focused on the education of British Pakistani boys and the role of religion. Karamat has provided consultancy support to national organisations, including government departments. He currently supports the Church of England Racial Justice Unit and the Diocese of Birmingham. Karamat is a lay leader at Riverside Church in Birmingham and is active in intercultural ministry.

**My interest in the multicultural nature of the church goes back to the days when, in 1995, I decided to become a follower of Christ. The foundations for this were laid during the previous 25 years that I had spent in the UK. When I was 12 (at least that is what it said on my passport) my parents decided to send me to England because they were of the view that they would not be able to give me much of a life in Azad Kashmir,<sup>3</sup> where I had spent my childhood. In my new home I fell in love with diversity and the multicultural society that surrounded me. Very quickly this became integral to my life and work.**

Having grown up as a Muslim, upon arrival in my new home I had ceased what little religious belief and practice there was in my life and began to live a godless existence, like most of the white people in my social and work networks. Ten years later I fell in love with a born-again Christian, the first in her family to accept Christ. This began a slow and long journey towards developing a personal relationship with God. During

the next fifteen years I observed and met Christians who were different from the other white people I encountered: less hostile, more welcoming. Then one day I was given Jeremiah 15:19–21:

‘Therefore this is what the Lord says: “If you repent, I will restore you that you may serve me; if you utter worthy, not worthless, words, you will be my spokesman. Let this people turn to you, but you must not turn to them. I will make you a wall to this people, a fortified wall of bronze; they will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you to rescue and save you,” declares the Lord.

“I will save you from the hands of the wicked and deliver you from the grasp of the cruel.”

It felt as if the words were written for me. This was God speaking to me in particular. It made clear that I needed to repent so that God could restore me. If I uttered

worthy words I would be his spokesman. In our culture we are taught to be careful and to think what others would say but here I was being told otherwise. I was being told that I would be given strength and kept safe. After two more days of thinking (something I had been doing for many years already) I accepted the invitation and a few weeks later was baptised.

Very quickly I realised that I was entering a worldwide Christian family that was multicultural. In a recent book that sheds light on this, *Multicultural Kingdom – ethnic diversity, mission and the church* (Kwiyani, 2020), the author points out:

‘As we come to the end of the second decade of the twenty-first century, almost 70 per cent of Christians in the world are not white and they do not live in Europe or North America. To put this another way, only three out of every ten Christians in the world are white.’

Elsewhere, the book points out that, in 2011, 49% of people who went to church

on any given Sunday in London were black African and Caribbean Christians.

Digging a bit deeper, I learnt much about the long-standing Asian presence in the church through researchers such as Visram. In her book *Asians in Britain: 400 Years of History* we learn about the baptism of an Indian youth on 22 December 1616 at St Dionis Backchurch in the City of London, 'in the presence of a distinguished gathering of the Privy Council, the Lord Mayor and Aldermen and the Governors of the East India Company'; 'the church was packed and a crowd of curious onlookers was gathered outside'. The parish register records the ceremony as: '22 December 1616. An East Indian was Christened by the name of Peter.'

According to the author, this is the first known record of a baptism of an Indian. From the same book we learn about Dhunjeebjoy Nowrojee, a Parsi convert to Christianity who had come to study theology at the Free Church College, Edinburgh. Also from Visram's work published in 1986 we learn about another Indian Parsi by the name of Shapurji Edalji, who had converted to Christianity in 1856 and travelled to England in 1866 in order to train as a missionary. He was ordained priest and appointed Vicar of St Mark's in Great Wyrley, Staffordshire in 1876. He remained in that post until 1918. From the

same book we learn about Aziz Ahmed, who had come to Britain in the 1880s to train as a missionary for India. He found that only Europeans were appointed for such service in India. In the end he worked as a missionary among Lascars (sailors from British India) in Glasgow. We certainly have come some distance. Elsewhere in that book we learn about Cornelia Sorabji. Born in 1866, the daughter of a Christian convert, she was to enrol for the Bachelorship of Civil Law, taking her examination in 1892 at Somerville College, Oxford, the first woman to do so.

Visram's history also reveals the part played by Indians in confronting racism in Britain. In 1921, the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society appointed Kamal Chunchie to the Seamen's Mission, for mission work among black and Asian seamen. He worked to expose the hypocrisy of Christian England, where black peoples faced discrimination, while the missionary message 'back home' had painted a different picture.

### **The struggle continues**

A more recent example of fighting racism within the church is provided by another Asian Christian, Mukti Barton. Mukti is Indian Bengali British, has lived and worked in India, Bangladesh, and Britain. As a scholar in Biblical Studies, using

post and decolonial perspectives, she has been teaching, preaching, speaking at conferences and writing for over thirty years, both nationally and internationally. Since these perspectives for Biblical Studies are not easily available in academic institutions, from 1980–1994 she dedicated herself to gaining biblical/theological knowledge through various organisations and applying it to concrete post-colonial contexts. Mukti's PhD thesis was the outcome of that.

She has been the Bishop's Advisor for Black and Asian Ministries in the Diocese of Birmingham and a lecturer at The Queen's Foundation for Ecumenical Theological Education. She was a lay canon of Birmingham Cathedral, a member of the Black Theology Forum and the Asian Women's Theology Forum and on the Editorial Board of *Black Theology: An International Journal*.

After coming to Britain from India, she found herself on the margins of British society. Initially, this seemed a very painful place to be, but eventually she found that it is also a unique place from which she could view how power dynamics work in society, in the scriptures, as well as in the works of the biblical commentators. Consequently, she has found that when power analysis is incorporated as one of the essential hermeneutical keys for reading the Bible,

the scripture is understood in a new way, empowering people to work towards God's reign of justice and peace.

She once said:

'My personal experience of racism and sexism in the UK has become political and bound me in solidarity with all fellow sufferers in their local as well as global contexts of oppression. I share the viewpoints of the oppressed of the world who are replacing the traditional by liberational hermeneutics and galvanizing each other to work for justice and peace. I am a liberation hermeneut, passionate about reading the Bible for human liberation from racism, sexism, classism, neo-colonialism, capitalism, militarism, homophobia and all that is destructive.

One of Mukti's great contributions was when she spoke out on racism in the church (2005). Her book points out that the same church that emphasises that all human beings are created in God's own image discriminates against people because of their God-given skin colour. The book presents the authentic voice of black and Asian Christians who suffer various forms of rejection in the church. The book weaves personal stories with biblical study, theological reflection and the psychology of racism in all its forms.

## Passing the baton

More recently, the journalist Madeline Davies wrote an excellent piece for the *Church Times*<sup>4</sup>. She spoke of the work, in the nineteenth century, of Anglican and Protestant missionaries and how 'of the 226,000 Christians of Indian heritage in the UK, many would be able to trace their faith to this missionary activity'. The article charts the heritage of some of the current leadership within the Church of England. The Bishop of Loughborough, the Rt Revd Saju Muthalaly, appointed in 2021, had come to the UK in 2001 as a 21-year-old on a gap year with the Christian charity Care Force. He spoke of the warm hospitality that he received – an experience that he contrasts with that of the Windrush generation. He stayed with a Messianic Jewish family, whose hospitality made him feel like an older son.

Davies reminds us that Indian Christians also bring 2,000 years of remaining faithful and flourishing in a predominantly pluralistic society; a gift that the Church of England 'desperately needs now', Bishop Saju suggests. He goes on to point out that, while Christians of Indian heritage in Britain need 'welcome and embrace' from our established Church, 'what we need is not making the mistakes of the past by telling people "Your kind of people worship down the road."'

The new Bishop of Huddersfield, the Rt Revd Smitha Prasad, arrived in the UK in the mid-1970s, aged ten. She was disappointed by the Church of England. She is reported as saying that the 'widest and broadest of welcomes' she was expecting did not materialise. While some communities offered 'profound love', she also experienced alienation and 'a sense of disappointment that people saw difference rather than commonalities, sometimes'.

Firmly grabbing hold of the baton is the younger generation of South Asians. Recently the Evangelical Alliance has appointed its new leader of the South Asian Forum, Rani Joshi. Rani comes from a Hindu Gujarati background. She found faith in 2012 through an encounter with the Holy Spirit. She actively participates in Christian ministry, from initiating a singles ministry in her church to contributing to the Race Equality Advisory Group for the Diocese of Coventry. She currently serves on the Parochial Church Council and Deanery Synod for her church. Rani is also involved in a prophetic mentoring group and mentors with Rise Women's Network. Passionate about sharing her faith, Rani launched *Couch Conversations with Rani*, a podcast aiming to normalise being brown and a follower of Jesus.

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# GOING, WELCOMING AND JOURNEYING TOGETHER



**Chris Binder** is National Director for Interserve Great Britain and Ireland ([interserve.org.uk](http://interserve.org.uk)). He and his wife, Rachel, are partners with Interserve, having previously served in Central Asia and South-East Asia for 16 years. Before returning to the UK Chris was a part of Interserve's International Leadership Team.

**I have the privilege of leading the UK arm of a mission organisation, Interserve, that has been in existence since the mid-19th century. Fifty or a hundred years ago, the narrative of Christian mission seemed much simpler, from a Western perspective at least (and you have to work quite hard to find non-Western narratives). Cross-cultural mission was all about going from the Christian West to the heathen rest. Today, however, two-thirds of Christians live outside of the West and we live and minister within what some have called the 'global church paradigm'. The idea of mission as a flow from Christian West to the rest is obsolete.**

Here in the UK, the church is changing. Harvey Kwiyani notes that 'there is a general consensus that British Christianity is becoming more diverse, with the African expression slowly rising in prominence.' Within the church, engagement in missions is also changing. Interserve commissioned some quantitative research into attitudes of Christians in the UK to mission and mission

agencies back in 2022. Respondents of African heritage were the most likely to say that it was important or very important to share their faith with others, followed by those of Asian heritage.

How are we to think about intercultural mission in this increasingly complex, diverse landscape, both in the UK and around the world? There are significant questions to grapple with, but I am convinced that, with God's help, we have a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate the barrier-breaking power of the gospel to bring salvation and reconciliation to a watching world. It is not easy. It requires us to be humble, to embark on a life-long journey of discipleship, individually and communally. But easier alternatives risk diluting the gospel message, impoverishing all involved.

## **Three dynamics of intercultural mission**

The history of Interserve provides a backdrop for three emerging dynamics

of mission in the church over the past 170 years: going, welcoming and journeying together.

### **Going**

Interserve, known in its early years as the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission, started out as a women's-only mission. British doctors, nurses, and teachers went out to South Asia to use their skills, seeking to work with girls and women who otherwise had limited access to education and healthcare. They worked alongside Indian 'Bible women,' and the desire right from the start was to bring a holistic demonstration of the gospel in word and deed. These women were responding to a perceived need but also to Jesus' call to be his witnesses 'to the ends of the earth'. This outward impetus 'to the ends of the earth' remains today. Much has been written about the relationship between the work of Western missionaries and colonial expansion. Brazilian Analzira Nascimento laments that a Western missionary model still predominates: 'contact with "the other" starts from the proposition of the

superiority of the envoy who is on a mission and moves from their own environment to help the poor, or those who are different, with solutions prepared by their own group.' This distorts the gospel message.

Whilst Nascimento's challenge should fill us with caution, this does not negate the call to be witnesses to the ends of the earth. As God has built his church around the world, we see people responding to such a call, and the result is often described as missions from anywhere to everywhere. For some, this means that the UK is their 'ends of the earth'. Going has become multi-directional, and that has to be a good thing.

### **Welcoming**

An increasingly multicultural population in the UK means that increasing numbers of Christians here have the opportunity to live out and share the gospel with those from around the world without ever leaving home. 'Going' means not only crossing the oceans but crossing the street. As such possibilities come much closer to home, it not only brings opportunities but also challenges to the local church. How well equipped are we to communicate cross-culturally and to welcome those into our churches who come from different ethnic and religious backgrounds? In a multicultural context, if we are to be relevant, we need to increase our cultural competence.

### **Friendship First**

'One of the surprising things about returning to the UK after working in a Muslim-majority Asian country is the degree to which migration has changed things. Christians in the UK cross paths with Muslim peoples from a dizzying range of nations on a daily basis. The Friendship First course, recognising this movement of peoples as a work of God, seeks to give ordinary Christians the confidence to engage with Muslims positively. The need for the course rapidly becomes evident when you run it in a Muslim-majority area: people come in with comments such as 'I just don't like Muslims' and 'I've never even spoken to a Muslim' and leave with their eyes opened by testimonies of Muslims who have chosen to follow Jesus and by the realisation that 'I suppose they're just normal people, like us'. The course breaks down barriers between people who often live side by side for years but never interact: one lady who has lived in a part of a city which is 85% Muslim all her life, and who has a large mosque at the end of her street, admitted that she had never spoken to a Muslim for more than five seconds – but left the course resolved to take a gift to her Muslim neighbours to wish them a happy Eid. Who knows where these relationships will end up?'

*Interserve Partner Matt, a Mission Enabler with the Deanery of Yardley and Solihull, Diocese of Birmingham*

Interserve has invested significantly in the production and promotion of two courses that seek to help churches to do that. The Friendship First course gives ordinary Christians the confidence and competence to become friends with ordinary Muslims and share their life and faith. The Joining the Family course is designed to help churches better welcome and support those coming into the church from other faith backgrounds.

In many ways, 'going' and 'welcoming' are two ends of the same movement if we are willing to strip out the power dynamics at play. Those who go do so in the hope that they will be welcomed by their new hosts. Why are those from the UK who respond to the call to mission celebrated as 'missionaries' whereas those who come to the UK from Africa or Asia are labelled as 'migrants'? What does our use of language continue to say about our

underlying assumptions? Even as we pray for the revival of the church in the UK, do we recognise and welcome those God is sending from other countries to be part of the answer to those prayers? Welcoming will certainly include walking alongside those who have recently started following Jesus, but it will also include learning from mature Christians from other countries who have come to make the UK their home. Do we welcome those who come as our teachers as readily as those who come to be recipients of our teaching?

This leads to the third, and perhaps the most important dynamic of mission today: journeying together.

### ***Journeying together***

The tendency of evangelical mission organisations to focus on work amongst unreached people groups in recent decades has led, amongst other things, to the tendency to downplay the power of the gospel to break down ethnic and cultural barriers. Reflecting on the teaching of the apostle Paul, N.T. Wright concludes that:

‘The church is the new family of Jesus-followers, those who have died with him to their old spiritual allegiances... and discovered their new identity as Anointed people, Messiah-people. Their present flesh-and-blood existence as this extraordinary, even miraculous,

single family is precisely the point, the sign and foretaste of God’s purpose for the whole world.

This family, in fact, is called to be a worship-based, spiritually renewed, multi-ethnic, gender-blind in leadership, polychrome, mutually supportive, outward-facing, culturally creative, socially responsible fictive kinship group.’

The Great Commission is not just demonstrated through ministry activities but also as a worshipping community demonstrating the values of the kingdom. A monocultural group of Christians cannot effectively demonstrate the power of the gospel to break down cultural and ethnic barriers. A multicultural community has the potential to be a much more effective witness.

Interserve’s purpose is to make Jesus Christ known among the peoples of Asia and the Arab world. We recognise that we can do that more effectively when we are more multicultural. Therefore, we have actively sought to welcome people to our ministry team in the UK from other parts of the world. We are seeking to grow engagement with black-majority churches here in the UK. Given our focus, we need to see significantly more people of Asian heritage in our community.

It is not easy to live as a multicultural community of Christ-followers. If done well, it will bring challenges. Back in the early 1990s, missiologist David Bosch wrote that, ‘The Christian church should function as an “international hermeneutical community” (Hiebert) in which Christians from different contexts challenge one another’s cultural, social, and ideological biases.’ Without such challenge, we miss the opportunity to grow in our discipleship, and our witness as a community is impoverished. Such challenge will not happen automatically. We must be intentional in striving towards a true reciprocity in relationships, and away from the power dynamics of ‘sender’ and ‘receiver’.

When we create the space for others to share their experience of our community, we may be challenged. In 2020 we held a listening exercise where staff and ministry partners from non-white backgrounds were invited to share their experiences of working within Interserve. A few of the experiences shared were shocking. People had suffered racial abuse and others had sought to downplay their experiences. As leaders of an organisation whose core-competencies are supposed to include cultural knowledge and sensitivity, we were saddened by these stories and have sought to shift the culture. For the sake of the gospel, if we are serious about seeking to build multicultural community,

then we must be willing to address issues of racial injustice. Otherwise, what does it say about our witness to the multicultural communities around us? Only God can help us to build the open, trust-filled relationships that allow these conversations to happen. Addressing these issues with humility is part of our discipleship.

### Conclusion

Contexts vary widely around the world, and these dynamics of mission – going, welcoming and journeying together – will look different in each context. But I believe that all should be present; the missional impulse to reach out, the embrace of the stranger, and the desire to develop relationships of true mutuality and learn from one another. Then,

‘By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.’

John 13:35



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# OUR CULTURALLY DIVERSE CHURCH



**Neil Masih** is the Diocese of Coventry's Intercultural Mission Enabler. Born and bred in Coventry, he gained a BA (Hons) in Social Studies at Warwick University and has a background in careers advice and teaching. A fourth-generation Christian, he was brought up as a Christian attending St Paul's Church, Coventry, where he has served as a churchwarden. The church is located in one of the most diverse parishes of the city, Foleshill. Neil is passionate about offering training, talks and listening to people in response to the From Lament to Action report.

**Coventry is a diverse city and, although it has its challenges, there is much to celebrate about UKME/GMH participation in churches. It is estimated that people from these backgrounds make up 15% of those who worship in the Church of England.<sup>5</sup> Some of this has been as a result of Christians arriving during the post-war migration. Sadly, not all of them were welcome. The Revd Andrew Moughtin-Mumby said of his grandparents' experience in the 1950s, '... my grandparents were asked to worship elsewhere as their presence was upsetting the congregation'.<sup>6</sup> According to the *From Lament to Action* report, 'there is a great deal of evidence that black people felt themselves unwelcome in British churches, just as in many other parts of English society'.<sup>7</sup>**

My parents arrived from the north of India. They had been brought up in the Christian faith. They, like many others of their generation, felt that the Church of England was their home. Although English was not their first language, they committed themselves to attending a local church upon arrival in Coventry in the 1960s. Unlike others, they were welcomed into the

church and attended all their lives. They adapted to the style of worship, liturgy, hymns and leadership.

## Two UKME stories

To illustrate the diversity of our church I present two stories here.

### Parveen

Parveen arrived from North India in 1980 and, following her marriage, settled in Coventry. She continued to practise her faith in the UK by attending her local church. She joined in and benefited greatly from the Bible study run in local homes. In time, she became instrumental in this work and began to contribute by delivering God's word in these holistic gatherings, eventually leading to her Women's Ministry. She reflects on how her faith commitment attending an Anglican church assisted her faith journey. She feels that her commitment to the church has strengthened her faith, helping her to understand Anglican worship styles, hymns, and creating fellowship with congregation members.

'The importance of reading scripture and reflecting on God's word in such

settings over 30 years has encouraged sisters to take a lead in understanding the Bible and finding confidence in delivering God's message. This has been an alternative opportunity for the women to participate in worship that was not led by men, who tended to take the main role in reading scripture, worship songs, preaching, and organising a prayer group.'

The home groups developed during the day, when women would normally meet for tea and a light Asian meal. The hospitality is important as transformative thanksgiving – 'we give from a profound sense of what we have already received'.<sup>8</sup> This slowly led to Parveen sharing her faith with Asian women in her community, initially looking at scripture and asking participants to share their thoughts, followed by prayer.

The fruits of this ministry have inspired women to share the gospel with family and friends; start additional home prayer groups; join churches and choirs to perform in large gatherings. Parveen doesn't wish to take credit for her home groups leading to Asian women growing in Christian faith. She explains: 'It's our call to bring the good

news of the Bible to others, particularly those who may have felt marginalised culturally or due to gender'. She expresses this further by referring to scripture on bringing others to faith:

'Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'  
Matt. 28:19–20

Parveen continues to offer the home group prayers that now include a daily prayer and reflection using social media. She is an active member of her church, reading scripture during Sunday worship to benefit those whose first language is Punjabi. She adds that her involvement in home ministry and attending the Anglican Church renew her faith to encourage others of Jesus' love for all.

### **Ron**

Ron has been attending Anglican churches for most of his life and reflects on his experience as a UKME black member of the church. Currently, he attends St Paul's, Foleshill, Coventry, where he is the churchwarden, and was churchwarden during a two-year vacancy.

Ron reflects:

'I grew up on a Coventry council estate, being one of eleven children. We were the first black family on the estate. I attended the local primary school and I now consider that, despite being in a working-class area, the school provided a good standard of education. They didn't have music tuition like some of the schools in more prosperous areas but some of teachers taught recorder on a voluntary basis. I joined and learned to read music. I didn't experience racism until I started school – someone called me a blackie. I knew it was meant to hurt – and I was shocked. Interestingly, my next-door neighbour, who was my best friend, described me as a "darky" to her grandma.

'As a family we attended churches at an early age and were all baptised. On a Sunday we attended the local Methodist church and occasionally the West Indian church in the afternoons. At the age of ten my brother and I were taken to an Anglican church by my father, who was brought up Anglican and wanted us to be too. Services based on liturgy were an immediate culture shock to us. Over time, the whole family joined the church; the only black family in the church at the time. My brother and I were told to join the choir, which we did, and we were eventually followed into the choir by most of our younger siblings.

'For many years the black members in the congregation remained on the periphery of church life, and it is my view that they were content with that. I was, however, encouraged by senior members in the choir to stand for the PCC, which I did, and served for one term. I didn't, however, contribute a great deal, due to a lack of confidence at that time.

'By the 1990s our choir had moved to a new church and our family followed. St Paul's, Foleshill is a multicultural area and its congregation reflected the community. Over time I have become part of the fabric of the church and am currently a churchwarden. Looking back, St Paul's had a reputation during the Windrush period of welcoming immigrants, my parents married there in 1960, and their third generation currently worship there. I think one of the things that makes St Paul's work so well is the appreciation and acceptance of the various different cultural identities.'

### **Thanking God for the diversity**

In *Building Cultural Intelligence in Church and Ministry* Steve Clifford (Evangelical Alliance former General Director) writes:

'I thank God for the unity which recognises each other as brothers and sisters in Christ, but I also thank God for our amazing cultural diversity.'

The insight offered by Parveen and Ron is encouraging as the Church of England responds to *From Lament to Action*. However, there is much work still to do. There is a need for increased representation in leadership from UKME/ GMH members. Beyond this, there is work to be done on how we use resources in our churches, ranging from imagery to videos and scripture readings, to reflect a global church. These resources can be particularly useful in churches where there is not a wider ethnic diversity in congregations to demonstrate a global church.

Through the Archbishops' Anti-Racism Taskforce, highlighted in *From Lament to Action*, the Church of England is addressing racism. This is a matter where we all have a part to play, whether we are in a lay position, members of a PCC, lay ministers or church leaders. We are all in this together, worshipping God, making new disciples and transforming communities. We can do this by following Jesus' example of forgiveness, loving others, asking for God's guidance through the Holy Spirit, and by reconciliation.

In our diocese we consider annual events such as the South Asian Heritage Month and Black History Month very important opportunities for celebrating our diversity and to involve people sharing their lived experience. I have been involved

## Conclusion

We have much to celebrate through God's creation, and much to build on. Having churches where there is diversity can enrich our worship, deepen our faith and help us to unite in God's love.

We need to continue to open our hearts and minds to welcome people into the Christian faith, recognising differences, trying new styles of worship which make the individual feel part of the church family. This can often be the place where people are drawn to be part of God's family, and we must be ready to welcome them into our global faith.

'The process of interculturalism is deeply challenging. It involves de-centring our own culture with people of other cultures with an openness to being changed by the encounter'. (Snow, 2024, p41).

This is achievable if we hold onto our Christian love and unity.



in providing resources alongside clergy to highlight Black History Month. For last year's theme, 'Saluting our Sisters,' I worked with a church in the south of the diocese in Leamington, where a display was added, including videos of gospel singing and reflection for the whole of October. The church is close to the town centre, and the display was well received. We had the pleasure of a sermon from Dr Carlton Turner of Queen's Theological College, Birmingham.

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# RIVERSIDE CHURCH, BIRMINGHAM; OUR DIVERSITY JOURNEY



**Tim Chilvers** leads the team at Riverside Church, Birmingham with a particular responsibility for vision and teaching. He loves Birmingham, and the challenge and opportunity of serving in a super-diverse city, as part of a thriving church. He is married to Clare and they have twin 8-year old boys. This article has been written with Karamat Iqbal.

**A**t Riverside we are on a journey to help people get to know Jesus and grow as his followers across Birmingham and beyond. We are a church made up of people from a diversity of backgrounds and experiences with one thing in common: our discovery of God and his amazing love.

We are making plans to celebrate our fortieth anniversary as a church. We began in 1984, founded by Nick and Lois Cuthbert and others with a vision to reach out to people with the gospel. In 1982 our founders began meeting with another couple in their house on Sunday afternoons. Within two years the church had grown to 50–70 members. It was later to be named Riverside Church, after the river of life flowing out from the temple, bringing life wherever it went (Ezek. 47).

Within ten years the church grew dramatically. It is difficult to put a current figure on our size as we do not have a formal membership. Our Sunday gatherings are thriving, and we have many

other people who participate the rest of the week or access the church online.

As Riverside impacted the community it grew quickly, bringing people from a diversity of backgrounds into a discovery of God's amazing love. We continue to reach out to our communities and places of work in every way we can. From those early days when we met for praise and worship, now in addition we have a variety of community programmes: Riverside Performing Arts; Sunday lunch for anyone in the community; Riverside Money Advice; Riverside Food Pantry; Riverside Café; Riverside Academy; The Well, a women's gathering, attended mainly by the Muslim community; Real Riverside Football Club – open to non-Christians; Riverside Stay & Play; Pineapple Estate Youth Project.

We are a very diverse community of communities. The city is more religious and less Christian than before. Our immediate neighbourhood is 80% Muslim. We believe that we have a responsibility to be as diverse as we can be, as a reflection

of the city. So, addressing diversity has been a conscious decision; to reflect our community, to look different because of our particular geographical community with all its uniqueness.

Over the years our community has become ethnically diverse. Around 20% of our members are from ethnic minorities. We have taken steps to make sure that this is reflected in our staff and leadership. We have over a hundred people in various leadership roles. Around 10% are from ethnic minorities. We also make sure that those who lead services reflect our ethnic diversity. If everyone on the platform on a Sunday morning looks like me (white, male), that's not good. We have to do something about it. We decided to have two people to lead the Sunday services so that it gave us more scope for diversity.

We organise training on diversity for our leaders, such as Friendship First, a course that will help us to connect with the Muslim community that surrounds us.



We celebrate diversity in our services. For example, following Pentecost Sunday we celebrated our linguistic diversity. A number of our congregation recorded brief messages in their mother tongue. These were broadcast during Sunday services.

When we recruit new staff, we ask:

- What do we expect them to know?
- What cultural or diversity competence might we expect from them?
- What is their understanding of inclusion that might be required in our church community with its super-diverse context?

We also consider what they are expected to learn in order to fill gaps in their knowledge, and how we might go about it. We have done that before for gaps in people's theological understanding but we've never, formally, done that for a lack of multicultural understanding or even understanding about Birmingham. We also make sure we are employing someone who is teachable.

A UKME member of our staff gave us some helpful feedback. We had made a two-minute video. Her feedback was: 'I don't see anyone like me until about a minute and a half into the video, by which time I

had switched off, having decided it was not for me.' For me as a white male, who very much saw himself in the video, that feedback was very telling.

We do service reviews. Periodically we ask about the illustrations we use. We might discover they're very white middle-class or not diverse enough. We try to be a little less monocultural in the framing of our language and presentation. How is this sounding or looking to those in the congregation or looking and listening in from the wider community on the internet?

### **Racial justice**

A gospel community should not think of certain people groups as inferior or others as superior; we're all made in God's image. We try to remove 'us versus them' thinking. In my view such prejudices are anti-gospel.

We ask ourselves whether we prepare our congregations with race, diversity and multicultural literacies. Discipling people includes those literacies.

Let us say Jo/Joe Bloggs knows nothing about diversity. Where do we want them to be in five years' time? How can we equip them to be witnesses for Christ in a diverse city and world? We are a big church. So, we are a 'sending' church, sending people into the wider world. How do we equip people

to be a witness for Christ in their diverse workplace, in the gym, at the school gate, at the bus stop, in the back of a taxi, in a balti restaurant, etc.?

We have taken a biblical approach to celebrating ethnic diversity, reminding people that all are made in the image of God, all are to be treated as equal beings, and that heaven is diverse: '...from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb' (Rev. 7:9). Wherever we can we try to put the message of the Bible in celebrating diversity and 'bringing the outsiders in'.

In a sermon on racial justice, delivered with the full involvement of ethnic minority members, we reminded ourselves that the diversity celebrated in the Bible is not experienced equally by everybody:

'Friends, it shouldn't be the case that someone in Riverside, in our church family, simply has to accept that there are certain parts of the UK where they don't go on holiday because people stare at them as though they don't belong there.

'Friends, it shouldn't be the case that someone in Riverside, in our church family, has to think very carefully when filling in job applications, because if they put their full, real name they know

full well that they are far less likely to be invited to interview than someone with a name like John or Tim or Sophie or Jessica.

'Friends, it shouldn't be the case that someone in Riverside, in our church family, has to worry about her children growing up because of stereotypes leading to those children being far more likely to be stopped and suspected of causing trouble. This shouldn't be, but it is.'

We believe in such a situation there are three things we are called to do:

### **1. We are called to listen**

To be like Christ, you step into suffering rather than observe from a slight distance. We must listen to the stories of racial discrimination, systemic racism, opposition, or simply being sidelined, from people in our church family.

### **2. After we have listened, we need to lament**

As we listen, we will discover there is much to lament and repent of. There are sins we have actively committed but also we've not done things that we could have done. Racism is personal, institutional, structural.

### **3. We are called to lead**

So often we in the church react to what is going on in society. The church has to model a different way and lead society.

We have an opportunity to reflect our city and model a different way. We are thrilled that we have such diversity in Riverside but we long for more in every area of church life, in the leadership team, in the trustees, in the bands... we long for every tribe, every nation, every tongue.

We are ordinary people all made in God's image, precious beyond our wildest dreams. Yes, we are flawed, we are cracked, we are sinful, but loved by God, and one day we will gather round the throne of the King above all kings as sisters and brothers. Our task is to see God's kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.

We have signed up to the Birmingham Churches Charter for racial justice.<sup>9</sup> This commits churches to challenge racism and champion justice and equality across Birmingham; to love our neighbour and bless our city. The Charter declares that:

- We, the churches, Christian organisations and followers of Jesus acknowledge the issue of racial injustice and its systemic and institutional nature.

- We commit to see racism removed from the church and society.
- We commit to an honest and open look at ourselves.

The Charter commits us all to bridge the knowledge gap, building a shared understanding of what it is like to be black or of other UKME ethnicity in Birmingham today, understanding the historical context and the damage to the psyche caused by sustained and systemic racism.

We are to speak up for racial equality and equity in the church and the city:

'We will inspire Christians engaged in business, health, education, arts and media and other spheres to be champions for equity, equality and builders of unity.'

We will do this so that justice flows like water, and righteousness like a never-ending stream in our church and the city.

### **Inclusion and belonging**

Some of our diversity has come about by chance. People from different backgrounds have just turned up and decided to stay. Others have come because of what

'Firstly, Riverside welcomes people in well and, secondly, Riverside keeps people well. I have had situations elsewhere where the initial welcome was all great and then it falls off and you don't hear from anybody. During my time here the church have been consistent in reaching out to me in lots of ways.'

'We actually have people who look like us who are leading. It's not just white men who are leading but there is x and y.'

'Our kids are happy at the church. Nothing comes to mind in particular. [Pause] Maybe we need more BAME teachers in Children's Church.'

'It's good to have ethnic diversity in leadership and upfront roles as long as

it's not artificial but real, i.e. people are there because they are the right people with the necessary gifts and it's because we are hearing God. It shouldn't be forced, and it shouldn't be because it makes us look good. We shouldn't put certain people in leadership roles for the sake of doing it. But if it's a situation like Acts 6:1-7 then we should appoint the necessary people.'

'Leadership behaviours are very important. The leader mentioning that we want to stamp out racism and that we are a multicultural church... The leader having the acknowledgment [of challenging racism and representation] is wonderful. He is a white male; that's who he is. He gets it. He understands that it's important.'

'It's not just about racism, it's about difference too. It's important to have difference too, others who are "different" so you don't stick out being "different".'

'In terms of diversity, I think it's important to have people from all backgrounds to be trained for leadership roles. It's a way to accept... the church isn't always going to be this one particular way. It's going to change.'

'Right from the start, I have had people coming to me and saying: hey there, welcome. I've never seen you before, and asking where I'm from. I'm amazed how people who I've only spoken to once or twice will remember my name. So, they have made me feel welcome.'

they heard about us or because of the impression they formed from our website or the services we have presented, in both their content and also who was leading them. We realised we could not take diversity for granted, nor assume that inclusion and belonging would just happen.

So that we can go on becoming a church for everyone, we listened to minority voices (see above).

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## Conclusion

We are no way near to being as multicultural as we would like to be. We are on a journey. We are trying. We need to work harder.



# WAKING UP TO, AND ADDRESSING, WHITENESS IN THE ANGLICAN CHURCH



**The Rt Revd Martyn Snow** has been Bishop of Leicester since 2016 and a member of the House of Lords since 2022. He is the lead bishop for lay ministry and is a member of the Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns. He has a background in the global church, having been born in Indonesia and later working in West Africa.

**O**n one level, I have always been aware of my white skin: I was born in Indonesia where my parents worked as missionaries for many years; my grandparents and great-grandparents were missionaries in China; and my wife and I lived and worked with the Anglican Church in West Africa. Yet only recently have I started to wake up to my Whiteness.

Willie James Jennings, in his remarkable book *After Whiteness: An Education in Belonging*, speaks of Whiteness in these terms: '[It] refers neither to skin colour, nor ethnic origin, but to a set of cognitive and affective structures, a way of being in the world and seeing the world.' He goes on to describe – through poetry and storytelling – the 'Whiteness' that 'bleaches Western theological education'.

Mike Higton, in his opening chapter to the multi-authored book *Deconstructing Whiteness, Empire and Mission*<sup>10</sup> picks up on Jennings' language, and describes in more detail the white self-sufficient, or

self-possessed man. This is the individual clergyman (it could be a woman, but traditionally it was always a man) who is multi-talented – preacher, pastor, prophet all rolled into one – in control not just of himself but of the world he creates in his image:

'The self-possessed man stands at the centre of concentric circles of possession. He possesses himself, his feelings, his knowledge, his vocation, his estate, and, ultimately, his empire. Under the cloak of his nobility, the self-possessed man is a man made for colonial rule, even if the colonial context that called him forth and that funds his existence is left far outside the frame of the picture.'

The more time I spend with people of different cultures, the more I read and reflect, the more I come to realise how Whiteness, or 'white normativity,' is deeply ingrained in me. I was formed in it throughout my education – from the way I learnt about history, to the way I learnt

science. All of it was imbued with a sense of Western superiority. I was formed in it through my theological studies, which focused almost exclusively on white, Western scholars. And I continue to be formed in it through the arts and music, through politics and the news. White normativity is everywhere.

Just as I have only recently begun to wake up to it, so too, the Church of England and other Western parts of the Anglican Communion have only just begun to realise its all-pervading nature. There are, of course, multiple reasons for this awakening – from the murder of George Floyd, which led to mass protests around the world, to other momentous events such as the Grenfell Tower disaster, the Windrush scandal, the pandemic – all of these have roused many in society to the reality of racial injustice.

The Church of England, thankfully, has begun to take action, through the establishment of a Racial Justice Unit in the national church, the appointment of a

number of GMH and UKME bishops, the Church Commissioners acknowledging the role of slavery within their history and so setting up a £100 million investment fund with a new committee of GMH and UKME people to oversee the use of its income. Funding has also been made available for dioceses to employ a racial justice officer, who can develop and implement diocesan racial justice strategies. These are all good as far as they go. But how does change happen at the local level?

### **Intercultural Worshipping Communities**

In the Diocese of Leicester, we have been developing a number of Intercultural Worshipping Communities, in both established churches and pioneering settings. The aspiration is for members in these communities to have a deep understanding and respect for all cultures, where everyone – whatever their background – learns from one another and grows together. What this looks like in practice includes sharing food and sharing stories, singing and praying in multiple languages, but most importantly, it normalises questions about who is being included and who is excluded, who I need to listen to more, and what I have still got to learn. Often, for white British members, this will involve a recognition of what comparative privileges they are afforded

because of their skin colour, their English-language fluency, or their accent.

As well as there being a number of distinct Intercultural Worshipping Communities, we are also keen to spread the learning from them across the diocese, so that everyone is encouraged to reflect on their own biases and the extent to which they are fully serving their communities in all their diversity.

I recognise that interculturalism may sound like an attempt to reconcile what cannot be reconciled. When such injustice has been done to people of colour, how can it be right to reach a compromise with one's oppressors? The approach of intercultural church is asking a lot of those who have no other safe space. Can this Anglican Church really be trusted? Will they welcome me as a token of diversity, but then expect me to change and become like them? No one can blame people for asking such questions, nor for saying, 'I've been hurt too many times before, I am not going to take the risk'. It can, understandably, feel far easier and safer to be with 'people like me'.

Nevertheless, we felt called to this intercultural journey to foretell the diversity of heaven and to remember how the early church bridged divides – chiefly that between Jew and Gentile – which no one thought could be crossed. St John's

Revelation speaks of 'a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands.' It may be a change in our demographic context that prompted the national church to strive for a more diverse church, but it is an ambition which is grounded in scripture and fundamental to our calling as Christians.

My recently published book, *An Intercultural Church for a Multicultural World*<sup>11</sup>, explores the notion of Intercultural Gift Exchange and three underpinning principles behind it: Generous Giving, Radical Receptivity and Transformative Thanksgiving. The first means recognising that each and every one of us is, intrinsically, a gift, as well as having God-given gifts. The second means 'opening ourselves intentionally to receive and be changed by the gifts and challenges of our "others,"' as Al Barrett<sup>12</sup> puts it. This is especially challenging in the context of whiteness, as for multi-privileged people like me, there is always the temptation to hold onto the power that the gift-giver has, creating a sense of obligation in the recipient. The third is about putting God at the heart of our gift exchange, acknowledging the Holy Spirit as the one who goes between us, enabling the giving and receiving in a way which honours God's image in both parties.

In the book, I also outline three traits which undergird these three practices:

### **Humility**

Firstly, humility – ‘having the mind of Christ’ as Philippians 2 expresses it, and ‘thinking of others as better than yourself’. Western economic power, or our scientific and technological prowess, do not mean that we are ‘better’ than others. That was the mistake of the missionary movement over recent centuries – allying itself to a ‘civilisation narrative’ which was deeply humiliating to those on whom it was imposed.

### **De-centring**

This also stems from Philippians 2, where we are told that Jesus ‘emptied himself’ or ‘poured himself out’ ( the Greek word is *kenosis*). In the context of colonialism, this suggests de-centring – not just taking myself as an individual off centre-stage, but also taking my culture off centre-stage. So, the vision of intercultural church for which I advocate is a vision of a multi-centred church without dominant and marginal groups. It is a vision of each individual and each cultural group being equally valued and playing an equal part within their community; and it is a vision of each national church playing an equal part in the global church.

### **Curiosity**

Being curious about other cultures and worldviews is also important. For all the diversity in our society today, it is extraordinary how we continue to live in homogeneous bubbles, mixing only with ‘people like us’. There is no substitute, then, for being taken out of our comfort zone and meeting people of different cultures; hearing their stories; witnessing the ways God is working through them and the gifts with which they are blessed. By nurturing our own curiosity, we are less likely to fall prey to stereotypes, clichés, or reductivism.

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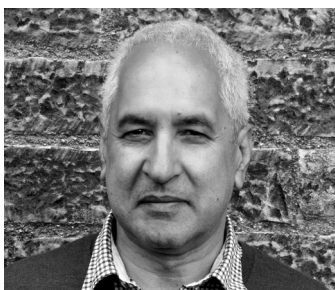
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### **Conclusion**

Humble, de-centred and curious disciples are the opposite of the self-possessed man described by Higton; they would be more conscious of their reliance on others, quicker to identify their shortcomings and the abuse of their privileges, and more open to seeing things from a different perspective. They would be less likely to succumb to a white saviour complex, and surely infinitely closer to the kingdom of God for it. Whiteness is deeply embedded in me, in our church and our society, but I am pleased that small coalitions are forming, communities of resistance which will, I believe, in time, bring about real change.



# LEARNING THE 'OTHER' LANGUAGES IN OUR MULTICULTURAL WORLD



**Dr Karamat Iqbal** has a background in race equality and education over 50 years. He has a B.Ed and MA in Race and Education. His research in the education of disadvantaged white children was used as the main text for parliamentary debate. His doctoral research focused on the education of British Pakistani boys and the role of religion. Karamat has provided consultancy support to national organisations, including government departments. He currently supports the Church of England Racial Justice Unit and the Diocese of Birmingham. Karamat is a lay leader at Riverside Church in Birmingham and is active in intercultural ministry.

**D**iversity is now a normal part of our lives, both here in the UK, and throughout the world. We routinely encounter people different from us, both in our own and their countries. In larger centres of population, such as Birmingham, where I have lived all my 54 years in England, we speak of superdiversity. A few years ago the City Council informed us that there were some 200 different groups who had made the city their home.

## **We are here because you were there**

Such diversity is often of our own making. From our small British Isles, we went to other nations, to learn from them, to trade with them, to exploit them for our benefit and to rule them. Later, we needed their help in our wars. After the wars, especially after the Second World War, we needed their help in rebuilding our nation and running services such as the National Health Service. So, we invited them here and passed laws to make this possible.

The church has also become ethnically diverse, both in the UK and across the globe. This has led one Christian leader, Harvey Kwiyani, to conclude that 'multicultural congregations are the way forward in the West'. He refers to research that pointed out that just under half (now likely to be the majority) of the churchgoers in London were black African and Caribbean Christians. More globally, Kwiyani reminds us that in 2020 there were more Anglicans in Nigeria than in Europe and North America put together, and that 'China is destined to become the largest Christian country in the world very soon'.

Diversity is, of course, biblical. The wide diversity in Creation is proof that God affirms it. Diversity and difference are gifts from God. The early church was diverse. The Bible tells us that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for we are all one in Christ Jesus. The rich and the poor; the Lord is the maker of them all. Heaven has ethnic and linguistic diversity; all gather in one place (Rev. 7:9).

How are we to respond to such diversity? Do the outsiders come and fit in to what is on offer? Or does it require effort from those who are already there? What change takes place, and by whom?

Diversity can be a learning opportunity for all concerned if they are willing to put in the effort. As we encounter people different from us, we can learn from each other, especially when it comes to people of other faiths, such as Cornelius in Acts 10.

Our contact with strangers can help us to see ourselves in a new light. This enables us to think, *Maybe there is another way, another perspective*. When strangers ask us questions, that can help us to learn about ourselves and our own beliefs at a deeper and more conscious level. Through meaningful contact with others we can discover what we have in common and see our differences differently. We may even come to accept the outsiders concerned and their ways of seeing the world. And they may do the same.

Diversity can be challenging. It is not sufficient to have different ethnicities and speakers of different languages in one community; for it to be a true community, more is needed.

### **A multicultural church in England**

In a Church of England report, *Welcoming Ethnic Minority Congregations* (2020),<sup>13</sup> it was acknowledged that ‘The number of white British Christians is declining, both in absolute terms and as a proportion of the Christian population, while the number of UK Minority Ethnic Christians is increasing’. It goes on to state: ‘all churches in this country need to reflect on the fact that Christianity here is more ethnically diverse than ever before – and on the likelihood that the trend of diversification looks set to continue’. In 2018 Jones and Smith<sup>14</sup> reported that in the Church of England in Birmingham there were 38 congregations organised on the basis of ethnicity, nationality, and language. They included Caribbean, Indian, Eritrean, Zimbabwean, Armenian, Cameroonian, Congolese, Ethiopian, Iranian, Latvian, Nigerian, Pakistani, Polish and Romanian congregations. It has been reported that, more than ethnicity and nationality, the challenge presented is one of language.

‘For several of the minority congregations a significant aspect of

their service is the space to worship in their mother tongue, which, inevitably, makes it difficult for others to participate, although some clergy told us that minority congregation(s) did make an effort to include English-speaking guests.’

So, lots of congregations in lots of different churches existing separately. No problem. The challenge comes when such ethnic diversity begins to surface in mainstream congregations. It is even more challenging when the diversity is linguistic. Society generally finds it easier to respond to differences of race and culture. Nevertheless, the church has begun to respond, slowly, to this linguistic diversity.

In Acts we learn how God enabled people to hear the message in their own language. So, if languages are important to God, we have to take them seriously ourselves. However, this is a matter that is easier for minorities to understand than those in the majority, who rarely have to reach for Google Translate to follow what is going on around them. Even if they go abroad they expect, and usually find, waiters and people in railway stations speaking their language. Because of this, it is hard for the majority language speakers to comprehend what the big deal is when it comes to language – until they start to learn a minority language. Yes, that is right; white,

Western people from the majority culture and language learning a language (or two) that is spoken by our fellow Christians who speak a minority language. One writer<sup>15</sup> has pointed out:

‘If we truly love one another in our fellowship, we will take steps to ensure that the language and cultures of all church members are respected in some way. For us English speakers, that means stepping back and allowing things to happen that may not feel very comfortable to us. It might mean having to dance (or at least, shuffle) a little, it might mean singing unfamiliar songs, who knows? But if we love our brothers and sisters as brothers and sisters we will appreciate their culture and language and will want to honour them.’

Language is a ‘uniquely powerful marker’ of cultural distinctiveness.<sup>16</sup> The importance of every language is underlined in Revelation 7, where we find people from every tribe, tongue, and nation gathered around the throne worshipping the Lamb. You don’t have to learn a special way of speaking to get into heaven. We learn from the day of Pentecost that there is no sacred language for Christians; all languages can be used for evangelism, for liturgy, and for prayer. Eddie Arthur quotes Lamin Sanneh saying, ‘Christianity is unique in being the only religion which is spread without



the language of its founder.<sup>17</sup> He goes on to point out that, as Europe becomes increasingly diverse and divided, the need for believers to accept and communicate across language borders becomes ever more pressing:

‘We need to learn to appreciate the richness of the language communities in our churches and neighbourhoods, and to build bridges over those borders. This involves welcoming strangers and refugees, but also the more mundane task of getting to know the people across the road who speak a different language and making space in our worship services for songs from other languages and cultures.’

### **The majority response to minorities’ languages**

As a consequence of colonialism, English has become a dominant world language. Most people across the world learn it in order to survive and thrive. This is especially so for ethnic minorities who have settled in the West. They invariably become bilingual and, at times, multilingual. But what of those in the majority group, the white Christians whose mother tongue is the dominant language? Everyone else is expected to learn English, so do they need to learn other people’s language(s)?

### **Language learning in the church**

Iranian-background Christians are now becoming a major presence across the nation. In a recent report for the Church of England I found at least five dioceses across the country mentioned their work with this demographic. As well as other aspects of difference, this new community of believers has placed the issues of language on the church agenda. The Church of England, alongside other denominations, are not only welcoming this community of believers but efforts are also afoot to produce appropriate resources in Farsi. A few years ago there was the launch of the Farsi liturgy at Wakefield Cathedral<sup>18</sup>. A crowd of 500 travelled from across the country to take part in this bilingual service, which included the singing of hymn verses alternately in English and Farsi, and prayers in both languages. The order of service included phonetic spellings of the Farsi phrases so that English speakers could join in with the Persian sections.

The Bishop of Bradford, the Rt Revd Toby Howarth, said that the liturgy had been created in response to requests from more than 75 churches around the country for Farsi-language resources.

‘The publication of the Farsi-language service affirms the presence of Iranians

in churches as a gift, and demonstrates commitment to welcoming them into the life of the Church of England.’

Presiding at the Eucharist was the Iranian-born Bishop of Loughborough, Dr Guli Francis-Dehqani. She said:

‘It is a very emotional day for me, hearing this service in Persian for the first time. This translated service is highly significant in the life of the Church of England, as we seek to find ways to adapt to the reality where we find minority communities as part of our congregations. I hope it will be the first of others to come.’

The Bishop of Durham, in his sermon, reminded listeners that no English speaker would have been at the birth of the church at the first Pentecost, 2000 years ago in Jerusalem. There would, however, have been those who spoke languages from which modern Farsi developed.

‘I had no ancestors there, but you might well have done. People from the lands of your ancestors were there. Your people were hearers and followers of the gospel of Jesus Christ long before our English predecessors’

## Tom's Farsi journey

I conclude the article with an interview I had with Tom, a 30-year-old white Christian from Bristol. I hope his example will motivate other Christians to offer linguistic minorities the radial welcome he is attempting to provide the Iranian Christians in his church.

Tom spent the first six years of his life in Zimbabwe. He is currently in a church which has some 50 to 60 Iranian members, in a congregation that is double that number.

'My journey to learning Farsi began with the church having lots of Iranians who lived a few miles away in a hotel, so they needed a lift.'

He explained to me that mission to white British people these days is so hard. So, when he heard about this group of Iranians actually wanting to come to church, he jumped at the chance of working with them, responding to what God was doing.

'We would have about a half-hour in the car together. They spoke no English and I spoke no Farsi... I wanted to get to know them.'

So, he began to learn Farsi, with the app Mondley, starting with phrases such as *Hi* and *How are you?* Around this time he

attended a conference through Welcome Churches. The speaker said:

'When you are doing mission, whatever your focus, young people, old people, people from another country... learn the language people speak. Even if they speak the same language as you, learn how they speak... It's about inhabiting a culture, their culture.'

So, he decided to play his part in God's mission.

'It was the most loving thing you can do; to meet people where they're at, by learning their language.'

'I realised that to form real connection with people you needed to go beyond the functional words and phrases, into the world of idioms. Just as in English you would not say to your friends: *Hello, how are you?* You'd say: *Hi, how's it going?* I wanted to say the same in Farsi... So, I began to learn the idioms and it would bring a smile to people's faces. I began to learn how people spoke in different parts of Iran. Or the accents and the different ways people talk. That's when you get the smiling, the laughing, the connection...'

There have been awkward moments, and periods of shyness. There have been a

couple of times when he said something inappropriate, such as using slang to an older person. He was soon put right. 'He looked at me, blank, and said: "Don't say that."'

'I now use an *Introduction to Farsi* book and every fortnight I see a Farsi teacher online. That has been helpful. I'm in my seventh month in my learning journey. According to my app I know 1,000 words in Farsi and 500 phrases. The next aim is devotional Farsi.

'In our church congregation there are 10–15 Farsi speakers who really don't speak English. They're finding it hard to learn English. So it's good to be able to say to them: *How was your week? What did you get up to? What's the best thing about living in Bristol?* I don't always understand what they say, but we can translate it. I can put together a rough conversation. I am willing to give it a go, though it's still awkward.'

### Advice to others?

Tom said that learning Farsi had been one of the best things he has done. He felt there was something godly in learning a language.

'You touch the divine a bit in the process. You are transgressing boundaries, and you are pioneering.'

'You face obstacles. You have to want it. Nobody is going to be cheering you on. If you don't learn a language, no one is going to notice. So you have to want to do it; the driver for me is to connect with these guys. I just want to learn more about them. I don't want them to do all of the work, to belong, to make friends.'

He explained to me that there are power dynamics between majority and minority Christians in our churches. The onus is on the majority to be welcoming; to extend the hand and to open up. He explained that he was learning about the broader issues involved.

'I don't want to underestimate the difficulty of coming into the country as a 40-year-old, with a wife and children and being stuck in a hotel, not knowing English, waiting for your children to be given a place in a school. The isolation. On top of that, finding a new religion. Do they do all the work? Can we do a little too? Can we reach out and welcome them, love them as God loves us? The Bible says: therefore welcome the way Christ welcomed you. Welcoming people in our churches is Christological. We should be willing to debase ourselves as Christ did in order to elevate others and bring glory to God.'

He has found learning Farsi has helped him tremendously. Learning the language has felt like love. He has had very appreciative responses from the Iranian men. He loves:

'seeing the joy on their face, seeing them smile because I have made the effort, getting to know them, building trust, transferring information.

'Mission is genuinely a two-way process; I get much more out than what I put in.'

He explained the ratio of effort to its impact. According to his app, he has put in 30 hours of learning. He asked himself if he would have put in that effort to make someone's week or pray with them in Farsi. He concluded that he would happily put in five times the effort for such results.

It is important to remind ourselves that we are one body and we need each other<sup>19</sup>. Different languages and cultures were God's idea. It was he who mixed the languages up at Babel. Our language and culture are incredibly important to us. This is something that people who live in majority cultures don't always appreciate. If we truly love one another in our fellowship, we will take steps to ensure that the language and cultures of all church members are respected in some way.<sup>20</sup>

For churches already facing language challenges, there is now advice available. Downie addresses the principles and the practicalities of multilingual churches in his book (see review on p.35). One article<sup>21</sup> offered the following advice:

- Use a language known by all, even if it is not their mother tongue.
- Use the dominant language and translate the service into the language which most minority-language groups understand.
- Use several translators, with earphones for those listening to a translation.
- Use a data projector/printed sheet for a second or more languages.

### **Every tribe and tongue**

All over the world, people from nearly every tribe and tongue read the scriptures together.

All over the world, people proclaim their faith in the words of the creed.

All over the world, pastors preach, elders pray, and ministers pronounce the benediction.

All over the world, the words of Christ are spoken over bread and wine.

All over the world, there is nothing which transcends culture to the same extent as the multilingual liturgy of the Christian church.

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# CAN WE REALLY JOIN THIS FAMILY?



**The Revd Azita Jabbari** (lead author) was born in Iran. Azita moved to Oxford in her late 20s with her husband and children. She grew a family business but always felt that something was missing. Then she discovered her calling to ministry and has never looked back. She was ordained in 2002 and is serving her curacy at Denham Parish Church, Buckinghamshire.

**David Watson** lived in Pakistan with his wife and three children, and now lives in a South Asian community in London. David is Associate Director for Word of Life ([word.org.uk](http://word.org.uk)), an organisation focused on the discipleship needs of Christ-followers from Muslim backgrounds. They promote the use of *Joining the Family* resources.

**The first time I entered a church, I took my shoes off at the door as was normal in my culture and faith background, and I didn't stop to notice that no-one else was doing the same. Then, halfway through the service, the churchwarden came to find me sitting at the front, in full view of everyone, and returned my shoes to me. I was so embarrassed, and unsure that I could ever return to that church, or any church, again. Yet the Lord kept calling me.**

On the third or fourth visit it was Communion, and as I was sitting at the front I was the first to go up, yet I had never ever had Communion before, or watched others do it. The cup was offered, so I took it (with a little resistance from the vicar), and drank the whole cup! When I realised this was not what they expected, again, I was full of embarrassment. I did not want to go back to church at all, and I could have stopped, but I was so hungry for God that I had to keep going.

I had many questions, but so few were answered by the sermons, or the home group that I eventually joined. Everything

seemed to be aimed at those who already had some Bible knowledge, already had been Christians for some time, and it was hard to feel like the church was set up for people like me, from a Muslim background.

I also experienced so little real community that it broke my heart. People tried to be kind, but they had so little understanding of who I was or what I needed, and they tried to find a way that was easy for them, rather than what was helpful for me. It took several years and much searching before I met people that really welcomed me as a sister and made me feel safe.

Sadly, my experiences are not unusual. Every believer from a Muslim background that I meet can share similar stories of pain and struggle to feel welcomed, accepted and discipled. You can read more of their stories in the books listed in the bibliography below.

I persevered, but only by the grace of God, and followed a call from the Lord into ministry. Yet I found it difficult to fit the expectations of the ministry selection and training system, and to communicate my

calling and my gifting. It was painful, very painful, but the Lord was faithful. I am now a curate in the Church of England, yet still sometimes in church contexts people ask if I am even a Christian!

I am called to the British church, the *whole* of the British church, but often people assume that I should be the one building relationships with other Iranians or other Muslim or ex-Muslim individuals and communities. Of course I will build relationships with them, but all of us must! This is why I am so passionate about the *Joining the Family* course and book. It is essential that the whole church embraces believers from a Muslim background (BMBs) as sisters and brothers, members together of the one family of the church, and receive their callings and their giftings.

## Joining the Family course

*Joining the Family* is a six-session video and discussion-based course which is designed to be run with a local church group, though it has also been successfully run online with individuals from different churches. The course aims to:

- help existing church groups to recognise the importance of, and learn how to welcome, BMBs into their fellowship;
- encourage BMBs and church groups to explore what being Christ's family together means, and what changes might be needed to become a church for all peoples;
- help churches and individuals to consider how they might grow in Christ as they journey together;
- highlight the potential blessings and opportunities that can arise through BMBs and an enriched community.

The course was originally created in the UK, but has been used in various countries across the world. Some have adapted the materials for their local context, adding flavour and examples that reflect the culture and Christian/church scene in their locality. The sessions have this content:

**1. Journeys to Jesus: What draws Muslim people to follow Jesus? (Acts 9:3–20)**

Gain insights from the different ways Muslims come to Christ; grow in the skill of listening, with our minds and with our hearts; and be excited by God's power in drawing Muslim people to himself.

**2. The pearl of great price: What do Muslim people gain when they decide to follow Christ, and at what cost? (Mark 10:28–30)**

Celebrate with BMBs the positive changes Jesus has made in their lives; understand the consequences in terms of identity, community and life structure; and begin to empathise with the cost and the loss they face.

**3. Welcome to the family: How can the church be a family to new believers of Muslim background? (Matt. 12:46–50)**

Realise that being 'family' means more than just church meetings; understand what former Muslims are seeking in Christ's family (and what they struggle with); and be moved to commit to 'being family' in deep and practical ways.

**4. Being transformed: How Christ's disciples of Muslim background grow in him (1 Thess. 2:7–12, 17–20)**

Learn how to be 'close family' to a believer of Muslim background; reflect on what factors have helped you on your journey of transformation so far; and commit to praying for your BMB friends to keep growing in Christ, or for God to bring such a friend into your life.

**5. A blessing to our churches: Why does it matter to find a new life structure? And how may BMBs enrich the church? (Acts 11:20–26)**

Understand why finding a new life structure is important for former Muslims following Jesus; be excited by the ways that BMBs can enrich churches; and be willing to make changes so that BMBs can enrich our churches.

**6. Ambassadors for Jesus: BMBs relating well to their Muslim community; and 'the long journey home' to an integrated identity (Mark 3:20–21, 31–33, Rom. 9:1–4)**

Grasp why BMBs need to connect with their birth community and integrate their identity; feel something of the pain BMBs often feel about their Muslim families; think sensitively about when and how BMBs can tell their families about their faith in Christ, and be equipped to support them in this area; and see how same-culture fellowships and belonging to a British church are both possible.

## Conclusion

It took me a long time to describe the British church, and any particular church fellowship, as real family for me. But I am so glad that the Lord did not give up on me, that he kept me persevering until I found the family that he had promised me. I hope and pray that the British church can truly be family for each and every precious new sister and brother coming from Muslim backgrounds. Not just for their sake, but for our sake, that we would enjoy

the whole measure of the fullness of Christ that Paul speaks of in Ephesians 4.

Authors Green and Roxy reflected on the slowly increasing numbers of enquirers and new believers from Muslim backgrounds in British churches, and asked, 'How well prepared is the church for the harvest that God is bringing? For what may be a trickle at the moment, God willing, will become a stream, then a river and even a flood' (*Joining the Family*, p.18).

Since then, the trickle has indeed become a stream, and so the question is no longer whether believers from a Muslim background can and will join God's family. Rather, the question for us is whether we will rise up to be the family that God calls us to be for them as this stream becomes a river and even a flood?



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# TWO-WAY STREET: CREATING AN INTERCULTURAL RESOURCE



**Nigel Rooms** is an Anglican priest and missiologist. He works freelance as a consultant, facilitator, researcher, author, editor, and spiritual director. He has experience in crossing cultures, especially in Tanzania where he worked for seven years.

**In the summer of 2022, I was approached by Guy Donegan-Cross, who is the Enabler of Learning for Discipleship and Mission in the Anglican Diocese of Birmingham. They were interested in creating a resource for churches on a journey to becoming intercultural and he thought I was someone who could help them.**

I asked him why they had thought of me and, apparently, I came on a recommendation from the household of one of the bishops in the diocese. While this was mildly flattering, it also caused me no little anxiety. I had reflected on, and even written about, the subject of my own whiteness. However, I knew intuitively and deep down, if I was to take up this project, I could not do it alone. What would it be like if a white man of a certain age, education and clear privilege produced an intercultural resource – not a good look!

Fortunately, for some years I have known Harvey Kwiyani, the author of some excellent books on the subject (see

especially his *Multicultural Kingdom*, 2020). I asked him if he would come alongside me so we could work together and co-create the material. He agreed, and we began to shape what we wanted to do.

Another great help was that the Diocese of Birmingham had a significant budget to put towards developing the resource, and wished to create some professional videos which would back up the learning materials. So, there turned out to be three 'legs' to what we ended up with.

First were the written materials for the interactive sessions we wanted to create within churches. Guy set the parameters for these by inviting us to create just four of them so that the resource as a whole would be manageable in a fairly short period of time. We designed each session with an overall theme and the same structure, which allowed for a community Bible reflection practice which crosses boundaries, input and discussion, plus what we called 'action and reflection' – so after the first week there is 'homework' to

be done in teams to be brought to future sessions. Each session also examines how worship happens in the church and introduces intercultural worship experiments where new things can be tried. The four sessions are:

- Catching the mission of God – learning that mission is first of all God's work, which we are simply part of, and what a difference that makes to how we go about crossing boundaries.
- Stepping into intercultural ministry and mission – researching and learning about the diversity of our wider community and how we might reflect that in the make-up of our church.
- What is culture? – by sharing food together as an event we learn about the intricacies of culture.
- Steps to radical welcome and hospitality – we address some of the obstacles and resistances to intercultural church and mission.



Next, we created two sorts of videos. First, we invited a wide range of intercultural thinkers, practitioners and church leaders (including some bishops) from a diversity of backgrounds to be interviewed on camera in a professional studio (we learnt a lot about how that world works!).

We asked each of the intercultural movers and shakers the same four questions:

- Why is intercultural mission important to you?
- What is the impetus from the Bible and theology for intercultural mission?
- In your experience, what does good intercultural community and mission look like?
- What are the main obstacles that stand in the way of intercultural mission, and what advice would you give to overcome them?

Our partners in the film studio edited all the responses into four videos (one for each of the four sessions) and we kept additional interview responses from some people on the web resource page as they had such wisdom (see Bonus Video Interviews).<sup>22</sup>

The third leg was good-practice case-study videos. We identified some churches which were on the way to being intercultural and filmed their Sunday worship. As a creator of the resource, this was the most fun for me and a fascinating aspect of it. We visited churches that have radically changed their stance to the people outside it, in their community, and now much more closely reflect that community. We interviewed on camera both their leaders and their members, who give great insights into what intercultural means to them. If you look the videos up (there are three of them), watch out for the final question where people give some amazing answers to an additional question, What would Jesus look like if he turned up to church today?<sup>23</sup>

Once we had created the materials they were trialled in some churches and tweaked in line with the responses we got back. One of the churches that has used the materials has given some video feedback on their experience – you can find this on the Two-way Street webpage (under 'Testimony'), along with the Participant's Booklet, Facilitator's Guide and all the videos.<sup>24</sup> The Diocese of Birmingham has kindly made the resources free to download.

Two other things are worth noting about the creation of the resource. My experience of co-creation meant that occasionally

Harvey challenged me about his involvement and our approach. This is what it is to work intercultural in mutuality and co-creation. One example was the debate we had about the meaning and usage of the words multicultural and intercultural – a conversation which is ongoing and needs to be so. We also took some time to find the right title for the whole resource, not least because Guy also wanted a logo to go with it.

Metaphors for what we are reaching for in the intercultural/multicultural church are not easy to get right as, it seems, we soon find their limits. Harvey uses the idea of mosaic in *Multicultural Kingdom*, and we played with this for a while, but eventually settled on Two-way Street as this seemed to capture something of journey and movement, plus the key idea that what happens across the porous boundary of a church needs to go in both directions – and



not just be a one-way street from us to them. The logo we came up with reflects this, and the importance of intercultural encounter.

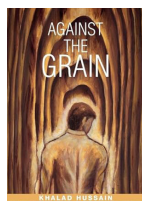
Finally, we were encouraged to ask the question of What does good look like in an intercultural church? So, with Guy's help we created what he called a 'maturity curve' for the journey. This means that before the course begins the church

leaders are invited to take their intercultural temperature. Under four headings of worship, hospitality, leadership and mission, a series of statements are made which can be assessed in relation to the current state of the church's intercultural life. At the end there is an opportunity for the church to create an intercultural mission statement out of what has been learnt, setting out the next steps on the journey in those four areas. We hope the resource can be widely used for the coming intercultural kingdom.

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# BOOK REVIEWS



## **Against the Grain**

Khalad Hussain, Xlibris, 2012

Khalad Hussain was born to a Muslim family in rural Kashmir. In this autobiography, we journey with him from Pakistan to 1970s urban Britain. He sets himself apart from his contemporaries in academic studies and in the workplace. After university, he takes the bold decision to start a family with a British wife. Through this journey, he makes the weighty and moving decision to become a Christian.

Hussain is a pioneer. His deep conviction to be kind and respectful to everyone makes him a leader in areas of gender, race, culture, and faith. He makes many decisions not to conform to a pre-scripted life, set by his family and culture, but to choose a life of conviction and faith.

The intersection of cultures is often painful. Hussain highlights tensions of family expectation, pressures of assimilation, and even outright racism. Yet when cultures collide, it is often the setting for generating art, music, and literature of profound beauty.

Hussain is a leading voice in the anti-racism movement, but is also a critical voice to the practices of the migrant community that he inhabits.

Hussain highlights the radical position that Christianity can offer to welcome those from another race and culture, if the church is willing to embrace this challenge.

'This book is a must-read for anyone looking to understand more about race, class, faith, religion, culture, gender and migration in the 21st century.'

Harry Fenner Crawley, Community Engagement Manager, British and Foreign Bible Society



## **Multilingual Church – strategies for making disciples in all languages**

Jonathan Downie, William Carey Publishing, 2024

With the help of Downie's book the dream of a church where linguistic outsiders are welcomed and can access songs, announcements, Bibles, sermons, prayers, and all that is on offer in the church, can

become a reality, and power will be shared amongst a linguistically diverse leadership.

The author does not pretend that it is easy but, as an experienced practitioner in this area, he takes us through this less-travelled bit of the diversity journey.

By singing songs in other languages, we affirm that these languages are worthy of use in sung worship. Praying in other languages demonstrates that those languages are suitable for talking to God. Preaching in another language demonstrates that God speaks in other languages.

Downie has provided us a timely, practical and groundbreaking resource that takes us out of our comfort zone and radically challenges our orthodoxies.

# ENDNOTES

## Introduction by the editor

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2 [amazon.co.uk/biography-word-Paki-incident-workplace/dp/1549991876](https://www.amazon.co.uk/biography-word-Paki-incident-workplace/dp/1549991876)

## Celebrating the church's South Asian heritage

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## Our culturally diverse church

5 *From Lament to Action* Report, p12. Church of England Anti-Racism Taskforce, 2021

6 France-Williams, A.D.A. *Ghost Ship: Institutional Racism and the Church of England*, p.93. SCM Press Publishing, 2020.

7 *From Lament to Action*, p15. Church of England Anti-Racism Taskforce, 2021.

8 Snow, M. et al., *An intercultural Church for a Multicultural World*, p84: Church House Publishing, 2024.

## Riverside Church, Birmingham; our diversity journey

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## Waking up to, and addressing, whiteness in the Anglican Church

10 [churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2023/22-december/books-arts/book-reviews/book-review-deconstructing-whiteness-empire-and-mission-by-anthony-g-reddie-and-carol-troupe-editors](https://www.churchtimes.co.uk/articles/2023/22-december/books-arts/book-reviews/book-review-deconstructing-whiteness-empire-and-mission-by-anthony-g-reddie-and-carol-troupe-editors)

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