



AMAZING GRACE

every nation every tribe every people

Bishop John

I am delighted to commend wholeheartedly Amazing Grace as a great gift to us all as we journey through Lent and beyond. God has already used it powerfully in transforming lives and perspectives as together we seek, under God, to grow his Kingdom in its rich and glorious diversity. It gives us the opportunity to reflect on the communities we serve, and how far we as a Church, reflect the rich diversity of God's people in our parishes and dioceses ... and at every level of leadership. Beyond this, for those of us who are white, it can help us to see that racism is not simply the problem of other people, but that we are, or can be, part of the problem. In recognizing this, we can become part of the solution. Amazing Grace offers the opportunity for us to learn together and to grow together in love and service of the God 'from whom every family in earth and heaven takes its name.' Eph. 3:14



Bishop Malcolm

For several decades the Church of England has seen a range of projects addressing racism and inequality within our Church. It is to our shame that it takes tragedy to make things really happen – true to form it took the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis in 2020, and all that followed, to bring about a Church of England Anti Racism Task Group, leading to the Archbishops' Racial Justice Commission, chaired by Lord Boateng, with its strong mandate 'to help the Archbishops fulfil their commitments to identify, respond to, and root out systemic racism in the Church.'

How do we respond, locally, and in the various contexts of this Diocese of Derby? For some communities, the experience of racism is a painful and daily reality. Others may get the idea this is someone else's problem – 'because there's hardly anyone round here like that'. We mustn't underestimate the challenges of ignorance, prejudice, privilege and engrained injustice, but i hope we can go further and learn, more and more, to delight in the glorious God given diversity of our human family, and to pray, and live, and work as one. I am profoundly grateful to the Amazing Grace learning community and its leaders within the diocese and beyond who have prepared this excellent resource for Lent 2023, and I am confident it will be profoundly helpful to us as a diocese as we look to see transformed lives; growing church and building community.



+ Malcolm Repton

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Introduction

What is the Amazing GRACE course?

The Amazing GRACE course is a six-week learning community for small groups, cell groups or church communities. It is initially being launched for use during Lent but would work well at any time of year.

What is Amazing GRACE?

This is a learning community committed to understanding:

- The problem of racism
- The experiences of those who experience racism
- The privilege of those who do not
- The ways racism undermines the mission and ministry of the church

It is a learning community committed to taking intentional action - in whatever way is appropriate to each member's circumstances - to promote race equality in our personal and ministerial contexts.

Why is GRACE often capitalised?

Good question! Along with other explicit meanings, it is also an acronym of:

Growing
Racial
Awareness
Champions for
Equality

Why is Amazing GRACE needed?

The vision given in Revelation 7.9 is of a multitude of every nation, tribe, people and language worshipping God together, yet this vision is far from fulfilled in the life of the Church today.

The sin of racism can prevent the full and equal flourishing of God's children and barriers exist for those who identify as UK Minority Ethnic (UKME) / Global Majority Christians which are invisible to their white church family. It is the responsibility of the whole people of God to tackle this injustice.

The learning community aims to be a supportive yet challenging space where participants can reflect on racism through engagement with Scripture, resources, guest speakers, and stories, then work together to identify ways that we can act for race equality in our different contexts.

How will the learning community work?

The participants will meet every week for six weeks.

The initial sessions will be focused on our own racism awareness, learning and formation as followers of Christ. For the second phase, the focus will shift to how we can develop good practice and learning in our own contexts. Each member will be encouraged to take action - big or small - then evaluate its progress and share learning with the community.

Who can join?

Everyone! We do recommend smaller learning cohorts to help facilitate meaningful and safe learning environments for all where numbers permit. We hope that these first cohorts will be able to multiply our shared learning in the future.

Where do I find the materials?

You can photocopy from this booklet directly or you can download all videos, PowerPoint and PDFs at no cost from the website www.amazing-grace.co.uk. Depending on level of demand, we plan to continue making the website available for a number of years. Feel free to adapt to fit your context. Feel free to photocopy anything.

The Approach

An important aspect of the approach for both courses (which carries over into this Amazing Grace Lent Course) was that it was a learning community of equals:

- We are all learning – no experts!
- Prioritise the voice of Global Majority Christians in each session
- Spend time listening to the lived and academic experience of expert guests
- Open and honest space with permission to ask questions
- Considering both personal reflection, attitudes and changed behaviour
- Rooted in prayer and our collective reliance on God's wisdom, understanding, forgiveness and Spirit to move us and change us

There is the expectation that people do some learning outside of the sessions, but we are realistic about how much we expect of participants and their busy schedules. For that reason, each week there is material recommended for the participants to explore before the next session. Although not everyone will have the time to read a book each week, we strongly encourage everyone to do at least something (from listening to a podcast to reading a short article to watching a video online).

There is a blended approach to content that includes bible reflections, prayer/worship (modelling inclusive liturgy), the main teaching or story for that day, group work, plenary feedback, and video recordings. We have endeavoured to provide variety and reach people across a range of learning styles.

Each session is planned to be between 75-90 minutes (depending on how much time you want to give to discussion) with tea/coffee at the end to continue conversations.

Because of copyright issues, we did not include all prayers, articles, or liturgies that were used. However, we tried to make it easy for you to find them quickly online.

Overview of Sessions

Every session includes prayer and Lectio Divina, followed by a Biblical Reflection.

- Week 1:** Shared lived experience, what are hopes/anxieties of the group?
- Week 2:** White Fragility, Racial Diversity Audit
- Week 3:** We Need to Talk about Race
- Week 4:** Black British History
- Week 5:** Racism in the Church of England
- Week 6:** Participant Reflections, revisit Diversity Audit, What's Next?

How did the Amazing Grace Learning Communities develop?

Diocese of Coventry:

The Amazing Grace Learning Community was piloted in the Diocese of Coventry in July 2020 in response to the murder of George Floyd. There were 40 clergy and lay leaders who were involved - covering various areas of ministry including parish ministry, cathedral chaplaincy, schools, the charity sector, diocesan officers, and spiritual accompaniers.

We were grateful for the support of Bishop Christopher Cocksworth and Bishop John Stroyan, as well as for the support of the Racial Equality Action Group in the diocese.

Thanks to the original planning team from the Diocese of Coventry:

- The Revd Ellie Clack (facilitator)
- The Revd Dwayne Engh
- The Revd Gareth Irvine
- Mrs Anna Naish
- The Revd Kate Massey
- The Revd Canon Dr Rosalyn Murphy

Dismantling Whiteness Conference:

Two members of the planning team (the Revd Dwayne Engh and the Revd Kate Massey) presented the pilot Amazing Grace Learning Community as a Case Study at the Dismantling Whiteness: Critical White Theology Conference on 17 April 2021. The online conference was hosted by Regent's Park College, Oxford and included a variety of speakers exploring the theme of Deconstructing Whiteness as a response to the Black Lives Matter Movement.

Diocese of Derby:

When I (the Revd Dwayne Engh) moved from parish ministry in the Diocese of Coventry to the role of Ordained Ministries Development Officer in the Diocese of Derby, we set up another Amazing Grace Learning Community in the Diocese of Derby. There were 31 clergy and lay leaders who were involved - covering various areas including parish ministry, chaplaincy, diocesan officers, and spiritual accompaniers. We were grateful for the support of Bishop Libby Lane and Bishop Malcolm Macnaughton as they continue to work to oversee further Race Equality across the life of the Diocese.

Thanks to the planning team from the Diocese of Derby:

- The Revd Julius Anozie
- The Revd Dwayne Engh (facilitator)
- Dr Jo Henderson-Merrygold
- The Revd Becky Reeve
- The Revd Jacqueline Stober
- The Revd Canon Dr Rosalyn Murphy (regular guest from the Diocese of Coventry)

Thanks to all the participants who journeyed with us, who asked questions, who challenged us, and who supported us. We are grateful.

We hope you find the course as valuable and transformational as we did. We welcome your feedback and thoughts. May God bless you and the work you do for racial equality in our churches and dioceses.

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