



Every End is a New Beginning

The curtains fell for the international and ecumenical conference on racial justice with a meaningful Eucharist service led by Bishop David Hamid at the St. Ursulas Old Catholic Church in Freiburg. The Participants gathered around the Lord's table and an image of the Kaleidoscope with a sense of achievement and a sense of purpose. Everyone was sure that this was only the next major step in the journey towards greater unity and closer inclusion. Archdeacon Leslie Nathaniel, who was pivotal in getting the program together commented that the purpose of the conference was achieved and we have miles to go for the fulfilment of the Kingdom vision. The conference analyzed the reality of racism through new eyes and critiqued the colonial heritage and prevailing narratives of history through fresh and dynamic perspectives. It boldly addressed the reality of racial injustice – visible and invisible - that still prevails in the life of the Church and Society. The practical ways suggested to overcome racism and to envision a roadmap for a community free of racial prejudices were bold, prophetic and pragmatic. The Conference heard stories of discrimination and pain. There was anger and repentance. But a general agreement that we are called to be on the side of those socially minoritized. It acknowledged that a culture of control still exists and this needs to be transformed to a culture of belonging. Bishop Robert and Bishop David affirmed the diocesan commitment to inclusion in every aspect of the life of the church. One of the major lenses that the conference used was that of the inter-faith one stating that justice can be achieved only together. The participants were leaving Freiburg not with a sense that something has ended, but with the sense that a fresh new beginning was on the horizon. God's Kaleidoscope awaits much brighter expressions of itself for the future to see.

**The new world is not there yet,
we are still struggling**

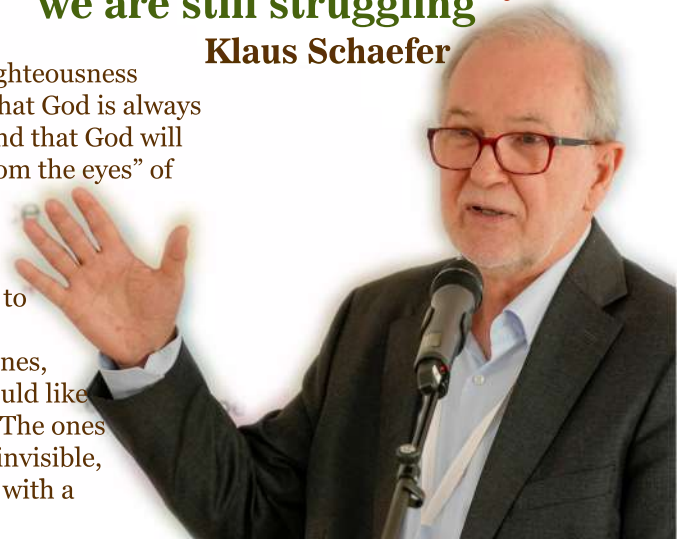
Klaus Schaefer

Christians are not fantasists;

they do know that the world is not yet a world in which justice and righteousness prevail. But they are also firmly convinced and inspired by the trust that God is always busy, working in the world to overcome evil and to promote justice and that God will eventually bring forth a new world where “every tear will be wiped from the eyes” of people and “mourning and crying and pain will be no more”.

Prof. Klaus Schaefer said addressing the conference.

In his concluding talk he said- I would just like “to turn the table”, so to say. I often mentioned the words discrimination, exclusion, marginalization – the people that are usually not seen, the invisible ones, peoples at the fringes of our society. In ending my deliberations, I would like to state that these so often invisible people do have a message for us. The ones whom we make invisible, that is our wish and hope, step out of their invisible, marginalized status at the fringes of our busy world and challenge us with a **“Mission from the Margins”**.





Racial Justice Conference Theme Song

KALEIDOSCOPE LM

melody Molly Catherine
arranged Stephen Brown
words Julie Lipp-Nathaniel

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

God of all people, hear our prayers for mercy. We cry to You for help in such a time of trouble. We have fallen short of Your hopes and dreams for us. We can see so many in our communities treading water. We can see so many starting to struggle in the depths of despair and debt. We can see so many affected by issues in society that we could play our part in mending. Yet we don't do enough. We come to You, Merciful God, seeking forgiveness.
(space where people can silently seek forgiveness)

God of mercy, Hear our prayers.

God of all people, hear our prayers for mercy. We come to You, Lord, You who are sovereign over all, and we ask that You would draw the whole world together, casting out the evils of prejudice and arrogance that cause hatred and oppression. We long for Your justice in our nation and world. We come to You, Merciful God, seeking justice.
(space for people to reflect on or to name some current situations from the news/local community/wider society where we hope to see God's justice)
God of justice, Hear our prayer.

We thank You for Your church, founded upon Your Word, that challenges us to do more than sing and pray, but go out and work towards the very answer to our prayers. Help us to realise that humanity was created to shine like the stars and live on through all eternity. Keep us, we pray, in perfect peace. Help us to walk together, pray together, sing together and live together until that day when all God's children will rejoice In one common band of humanity in the reign of God, we pray. (This prayer is based on a prayer by Revd Dr Martin Luther King Jnr)
(space where people can speak out or sing out words of peace)

God of peace, Hear our prayer.

God of all people, hear our prayers of hope. We come to You, Lord, You whose love is without limit and without end, And we ask that You help us to open our hearts, minds and wills to You. As we hope for the day when we can live as members of one family at home in the world. we come to You, Merciful God, in hope.
(space where people can speak out or sing out words of hope)
God of mercy, Hear our prayer.
God of justice, Answer our prayers.
God of peace, Hear our prayer.
God of hope, Inspire us anew.
Amen.





Racial Justice – From Vision to Mission: The Time to Act is Now

A Statement from the International and Ecumenical Racial Justice Conference

“God’s Kaleidoscope”

- **We dream that the daring dreams of our generation will be the reality of our children.**
- **We admit that our previous admissions of guilt have rarely been followed by atonement and reparation.**
- **We are aware that we must turn our awareness of injustice into practice of justice.**

From 9 – 11 November 2023, Christians from the Church of England, in particular the Diocese in Europe, the Racial Justice Unit, the wider Anglican Communion, partner churches and organisations, in particular WCC and USPG, as well as other Christian Churches and personalities from other faiths worldwide, have gathered at Freiburg, Germany, to hold a conference on racial justice.

Participants were aware that the first day of their meeting held a tragic significance in the context of racial hatred, as 9th November 1938 – the ‘Reichsprogromnacht’ – made unambiguously visible the systematic persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany and the annihilation of Jewish life as its ultimate goal. Participants also expressed their agony at the ongoing and unbridled violence between peoples and nations, causing so much of loss of life and challenging dreams and hopes for justice and peace in our time. They highlighted the wish for the conference to offer a sobering and discerning voice, and to restore confidence in the future. With this in mind, the Conference adopted the following Statement:

“So God created humans in His own image; in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them.” Gen 1:27
“There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Gal 3:28

We, as Christians from different backgrounds have come together to

- better understand the detrimental impact racial prejudice and systemic racism have on personal dignity and opportunities to develop and thrive, in our communities and societies, and how they prevent us, as the Church, from becoming the community and the force we are called to be by God;
- more fully grasp how racism is a form of violence and how othering, structural bias and discrimination relate with manifold loss of lives: through violence, armed or frozen conflicts, terrorism, and war;
- start feeling how prejudice, condescension, discrimination and humiliation – subtle or aggressive – affect real lives of real people, traumatise many of our sisters and brothers, and perpetuate pain and shame, fear, desperation and also anger;
- strengthen and speed up what little movement for racial justice there already is in our Churches, making it more visible, impossible to ignore, and turn it into a major force of transforming our churches into models of how humankind should boldly embrace its diversity and see it as an opportunity rather than as an obstacle,

- encourage and empower every person to take their fair share, claim their own space, take their position and fulfil their potential in life as a matter of course.

We therefore affirm, as our common theological basis, that

- racism is a sin and to justify it is a heresy because racism denies our common identity as God’s children. It is against God’s will to assign second class status to some of us based on random criteria such as race, caste, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or disability. All humans are equally loved by God and have a right to equal treatment by their fellow humans.

- it is our task to affirm our common identity as God’s children and dismantle those systems and structures which both overtly and covertly hinder us from recognising the image of God within each one of us.

- we as Christians must recognise diversity as integral to God’s design of and will for this world and affirm that, as baptised into the body of Christ, we are called to receive Christ’s promise of life in all its fullness for everyone – and be ‘born-against’ unjust systems that wish to keep it for a few. - the tapestry of our lives must be interweaving, not just bumping up against each other: As people living in the ‘middle of that tapestry of different kinds of belonging, different layers of identity, and therefore also different levels of motivation and vision... the challenge is to take seriously that diversity of different sorts of belonging, without just making them rivals to each other’ (Rowan Williams).

- we affirm and celebrate the bonds of affection that bind us together, discovering how we form the body of Christ who has torn down the dividing walls of hostility between us (Eph 2:11) and made us all heirs of God and his co-heirs (Rom 8:17).

- justice is God’s promise for a world in which wrongs are being righted, everyone’s right is being upheld, wounds are being healed, inequalities are levelled out, and peace is unfolding within all creation. Justice is an expression of God’s love, and those, who love, do justice and share what they have received.

“Execute judgment and righteousness, and deliver the plundered out of the hand of the oppressor. Do no wrong and do no violence to the stranger, the orphan, or the widow.” Jer 22:3

“Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.” James 2:17:26

Having listened carefully to all the experiences shared, all the pains and frustrations expressed, all the hopes voiced, we call upon our Churches to

- endorse, own and increase efforts, which have been promoted by a few for many decades, to move from vision to mission, not only paying lip service to equality and justice, but living it,
- join together with all other agents of change for a better world that seems to change for the worse, and to prevent populists and nationalists from reclaiming spaces we had already believed to be liberated from repressive ideologies,



- concede power and space to young people who claim their share in reshaping the church, not just viewing them as its future, but knowing and supporting them as part of the present,
- take seriously the need for dialogue and cooperation with people of other faiths and beliefs, as injustice cannot be changed by Churches alone, even if they are united in their engagement,
- show more courage and determination in proclaiming the gospel of love, justice and peace in word and in deed with greater confidence in and commitment to what we know to be the truth and God's will for this – God's – world.

“Whoever conceals their transgressions will not prosper, but they who confess and forsake them will obtain mercy.” Prov 28:13 Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother or sister sins, rebuke them, and if they repent, forgive them. Luke 17:3

Following deep discussions and respectful exchanges of views and experiences, we agree on the following conclusions for our Churches:

- The first step towards racial justice is to acknowledge existing injustices and their root causes. This must include an uncompromising analysis of current power structures, political, economic and ecclesial, and must include new injustices, in particular caused by ecological destruction and climate change, which follow from colonial continuities in a system based on submission and exploitation.
- The second step towards racial justice is understanding the impact of the sins of the past – such as enslavement and colonisation – on life in the present, and how they will also shape our future if we don't consciously and resolutely change course.
- The third step towards racial justice is repenting of those sins, even those that we have not committed ourselves but from which we still draw privilege and status and power, and make amends for what amends can still be made, rectify what can still be rectified, restore what can still be restored, heal what can still be healed – even at a cost to ourselves.
- The fourth step towards racial justice is giving a voice to those who were not heard, visibility to those who were overlooked, a safe place to those who were excluded, and honour to those who were looked down upon.
- The fifth step towards racial justice is to then discover how this new diversity is a strength and source of life for our Churches. They are in deep need of renewal in order to survive and thrive.

“For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before Me,” says the Lord, “So shall your descendants and your name remain.” Is 66:22

“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” Rev 21:1.4

During our conference, we have experienced how deep encounters and discourses can transform the way we see each other, perceive each other and understand one another. We are encouraged by this realisation and recommend that our Churches follow our example and open up spaces for conscious exchanges on the theme of racial justice. We are convinced that racial justice must be the life breath and an essential element of all ecclesial bodies and church activities.

As concrete measures to fill this claim with life we recommend that racial justice must

- be a regular and compulsory topic in all relevant deliberations and decision making processes on all levels of Church organisation,
- mandatorily be taken into account when analysing power structures and their impact on the promotion or prevention of change,
- in the Diocese in Europe of the Church of England be the subject of a study commissioned by the Diocesan Racial Justice Working Group to analyse power structures that have an impact on the promotion and/or prevention of change and the ability of our churches to be a prophetic witness to the Church and to the world,
- constitute an integral part of education and training as well as all relevant material used therein, already starting with Sunday Schools (as it is easier to learn equality than to unlearn bias). In particular, it must specifically be included, both in theology and practice, in the training programmes for curates, for lay ministers, and in the lay discipleship courses; furthermore, racial justice must be integrated into all safeguarding training programmes,
- be given visibility in our liturgies and prayers, through the inclusion of grieving for the injustices of the past, challenging unjust and biased hierarchies and stereotypes, prayers of repentance, and through reflecting the multicultural nature of God's Church.
- figure as an essential and prioritised item of the Churches' public political and advocacy work, in particular in speaking out
 - > against racism and discrimination in politics and society,
 - > against the perpetuation of patriarchal systems of humiliation and oppression,
 - > for groups which are particularly vulnerable, such as Roma people and travellers, refugees and asylum seekers,
 - > for a revision of the global economic and trade systems, giving marginalised markets a real chance and safeguarding civil, political, social, cultural and ecological human rights.



Participants of the International and Ecumenical Racial Justice Conference at Freiburg, Germany, 9-11 November 2023

In Partnership with among others



EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN⁺
CHURCH OF FINLAND



Evangelisch-lutherische Landeskirche Hannover/
The Church of Sweden/The Church of Norway



“The Conference Opened a Window to the World for Us”

Kaleidoscopic indeed was this conference in several ways. It brought together a wide variety of talents. People with wisdom of age, richness of experience and overarching commitment for justice.

The wide range of resource persons drawn from a kaleidoscopic choices added colour and richness to the discourses. It was not only intellectual finesse and emotional fineness at the brim but also a willingness to listen, appreciate different points of view and agreeing to disagree.

This should not be a one off event but a major step towards the building of the future we are waiting for, the participants commented. The sense of the house was best communicated by Lay Canon Andrew Khoo who called the conference “A window to the world”.

Where do we Matter?

Snippets from the Closing Talk of Archdeacon Ven. Dr. Leslie Nathaniel

Friends,

We have come to the final event of this International and Ecumenical Conference on Racial Justice. This conference I trust has been a groundbreaking moment in the life and witness of our Diocese in Europe and that of our partners. From a situation of little hope, we dreamed together, and now we pray that a fresh momentum has begun. Together we have been inspired and challenged; together we have wrestled and celebrated; we have been pained and crossed bridges of reconciliation. I believe a Kairos moment was grasped.

We rejoice and are thankful that this conference could be set in a wider international and ecumenical context, giving expression to the many heartening developments in church-to-church relationships and partnerships. These continuing friendships between churches and partners, is precious and will need continuing attention and sensitivity.

I here remind, however, that rejoicing in all that is achieved is not enough: the Gospel calls us to continually define and shape the life of our communities, this requires us not only to be faithful to the tradition which we have inherited, but also to be responsive to new issues. We are called to exercise a critical and prophetic role within the life of our nations, and to witness to a unity in Christ which transcends national loyalties and boundaries, and which enables the churches to bear effective Christian witness and service.....

The text chosen for today’s reflection is from the Letter to the Ephesians which puts this wide perspective before us (Ephesians 3:14-21).

The key thought in Ephesians is the gathering together of all things, the whole of creation, with Christ at the centre. Without this centre the world is divided, disunited, and broken. Those in power become gods themselves: oppressive and destructive for they ignore this centre. That was the world as experienced by the author of this letter. And does it not reflect the world we are seeing today?

For all our achievements as human beings and all the progress, and even the prospects that humankind faces no limits to its achievements, are they only for the good??

Do we not see a frightening loss of values and respect for one another the world over, leading to open conflict and terrorism with wide scale destruction, loss of life and suffering. Vast groups of people are cut off: - from economic resources, from their geographic homelands and from a cohesive and supportive social environment. And as we have heard painful witness at this conference: the colour of skin, ethnicity or social background still far too often endemically function as markers for discrimination. We could mention so many contexts of violence, dire situations of poverty, the homeless, migrants and refugees, not to forget the serious environmental concerns. Our world is getting ever more fragmented and wider conflicts threaten.

Into these realities we must ask the urgent question:

Where do we as people of faith in God our Creator, in Jesus of Nazareth and the Spirit of God whom we claim, matter?





The Journey



Will Go On...

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