

## The Rt Revd Dr Michael Ipgrave

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# THE BISHOP OF LICHFIELD

22<sup>nd</sup> June 2020

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

I send you my warm greetings and prayers as we continue to walk together in these unusual days. Today is National Windrush Day, marking 72 years since the arrival of Caribbean migrants on the ship *Empire Windrush*. Together with Bishop Clive and Bishop Sarah, I wanted to write to you about the common future that we are working to build.

As a country, a region and a church we have been greatly enriched by the 'Windrush Generation', who were invited from the Caribbean nations to live and work in the UK in the 1950s and 1960s, and by many others from Commonwealth nations and other places who with their descendants have contributed so much to our society. Black and Minority Ethnic people in this country have endured a long and painful struggle to achieve justice, often in a climate of suspicion and hostility. The struggle for our BAME communities is however far from over. This has been demonstrated by the waves of protest and unrest following the murder of George Floyd and the groundswell of support for the Black Lives Matter movement, in this country as well as in the USA.

As a diocese, we have much to be thankful for; we are greatly blessed by being a community of many ethnicities, cultures and nationalities joining together in worship and service. The dedicated work of the Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns has been invaluable for the Church both centrally and locally, and we are blessed by the faithful ministry of BAME clergy and lay ministers. But, as with other institutions in the UK, there are still many challenges for us to identify, address and overcome. There is urgent work for us to do together in our parishes, Fresh Expressions, chaplaincies and schools, in our Cathedral, and in our diocesan life. This is relevant especially in areas such as: recruitment of clergy; discernment of vocations; representation at every level of governance and leadership; educational provision; ecumenical partnerships. We need to be courageous in facing and enabling conversations around difficult issues. Systemic change will be needed, taking into account an honest appraisal of our history and of our current position. It is my intention to establish a task force in our diocese to look at these issues, and I will provide more details about this in the near future.

More important than ever at this time are the faith on which we rely and the mission through which we express that. Our faith is in the God who respects each one of us and who always hears compassionately the cries of those who are shut out. And our mission is to be in partnership with fellow Christians from all churches as we together work to bring the liberating, healing and joyful gospel of Jesus Christ to all the two million people in our diocese. As we come out of lockdown, the sense of solidarity that has galvanised communities since March may well begin to fracture, with a rise in racism and discrimination a real threat. This is our time as a church confidently to proclaim together the gospel that radically includes, embraces, reconciles and transforms us all. I ask that you join me in marking National Windrush Day today as we pray for a church that reflects the richness and variety of our communities, and as we consider together the ways in which we can work for racial justice as people of hope.

With my warm good wishes,

*+Michael Ipgrave*



**DIOCESE OF  
LICHFIELD**



**DISCOVERING  
THE HEART OF GOD**



**GROWING  
DISCIPLES**



**REACHING  
NEW GENERATIONS**



**TRANSFORMING  
COMMUNITIES**



**PRACTISING  
GENEROSITY**