

CHELMSFORD DIOCESAN SYNOD

Title: **COMMITTEE FOR MINORITY ETHNIC ANGLICAN CONCERNS (CMEAC)**

Sponsor: **ARCHDEACON OF SOUTHEND**

Date: **14 NOVEMBER 2015**

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper and agenda item provides an update on the work of the Chelmsford Diocesan Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns (CMEAC) and seeks Synod's endorsement of four priority areas for further action.

2. WORK OF CMEAC

Over the last year CMEAC has been re-formed and has spent some time thinking about how to promote diversity and inclusion issues within this diocese. Not only is this diocese large, it is also among the most ethnically and culturally diverse. However this diversity has historically not been reflected in the leadership, culture and ministry of the Church. Developing this agenda is not about guilt or blame; it is about moving forward in a positive way. It is a joyful thing: that all are welcome. This work therefore fits as part of our diocesan response to developing discipleship.

The CMEAC group¹ has been working on identifying priorities and practical quick wins. These are particularly in the areas of awareness, training and communication. A particular priority, articulated in *Transforming Presence*, is to raise awareness and visibility of minority ethnic vocations to lay and ordained ministry, as well as to other roles in the local church and wider diocese.

3. UNCONSCIOUS BIAS TRAINING

We are proposing that a starting point to raise awareness is to develop a programme of training on 'unconscious bias'. Unconscious bias training has been used by many organisations to address the issue of bias and its impact in recruiting, retaining and developing the best people, as well as how to engage effectively with customers, or in our case, parishioners and those in the communities we serve.

Psychologists refer to unconscious bias as our unintentional people preferences that result from the processes of socialisation and social categorisation. Research has demonstrated that when the unconscious mind sees two things occurring together, for

¹ CMEAC membership: The Ven Mina Smallman, Archdeacon of Southend (Chair), Revd Dr. Chigor Chike (Vice-Chair), Revd Jo Delfgou, Revd Ade Eleyae, Revd Yousouf Gooljary, Revd Penny Sayer, Revd Neil-Allan Walsh.

instance women and child caring roles, it begins to wire these associations together neurally. All human beings are 'hard wired' to make rapid judgements about others and to develop unconscious judgments and bias.

However, research has also shown that by actively working to reduce our unconscious bias we are able to free up our mental resources to increase logical thinking, problem solving and reasoned arguments. In the context of the church it means making better judgements for parishioners, and fairer decisions in the recruitment to lay and ordained roles within the church. This means making the most of the diverse talent available and valuing people equally as we are called to do.

We are exploring a tailored programme of unconscious bias training for use within the church context. Our Bishop's Staff Team have committed to trialling this on 12 November, and we hope that this is something that could be rolled out to staff and those with leadership responsibilities within the diocese.

4. MOTION

The priorities identified by CMEAC, including unconscious bias training, are set out as part of the Diocesan Synod motion below. This motion seeks Synod's affirmation of the importance of this issue and endorsement of the priorities. It therefore asks the Bishop's Council to develop a plan to deliver these priorities.

'This Synod request that the Bishop's Council develops proposals to meet the following aims:

- 1. Developing a greater awareness by affirming the commitment of the Diocese to diversity and inclusion, and to support and promote this by putting in resources so that all people in positions of responsibility within the diocese receive Unconscious Bias training.*
- 2. Encouraging and developing Minority Ethnic Vocations by ensuring that theological training is inclusive and accessible to all and promoting Minority Ethnic vocations to ordained ministry in the Diocese*
- 3. Promoting a more inclusive approach across the Diocese so that all our communications both our outward and inward facing are truly reflect the diversity of the Diocese.*
- 4. Recognising the vital importance that leadership in the Diocese reflect the diversity of the diocese and be more representative of the congregations they lead, and to encourage this by supporting the development and provision of a leadership course for Minority Ethnic clergy.'*