

LETTER from Sandra Ackroyd- co-ordinator of Thames North Church and Society Network - April 2022

Dear Friends,

We bring you greetings from the Synod Church and Society Network including The Racial Justice Advocate hub. So much has happened in the world; our society; our churches in the past 12 months, so much suffering and also achievements. It is so overwhelming, it is difficult to know where to start. This Newsletter, together with the reflections has come a bit later this year but we hope that what is here will be helpful to us all, all be it in different ways. We recognise that in a widespread Network such as ours there are different issues and challenges that are dear and precious to us as individuals and as churches. We acknowledge the in-depth reflection given to us by Revd Nancy Babarinde (a Thames North Racial Justice Advocate), on Climate change and becoming an eco-church and also Racism and becoming an anti-racist church. We thank Nancy for this piece of work and for the fact that she has made an inciteful connection and connectedness between these 2 major injustices.

You will see that at the bottom of this letter are some dates to remember, including Saturday 24th September when we hope to hold our 2022 Church and Society and Racial Justice Advocate Event. We will be getting touch with some of you to invite you to take part in the programme for the day.

- Christian Aid Week- 15th-21st May 2022
- URC Racial Justice Advocate Gathering- Saturday 18th June 2022- at Lumen Church Centre - 11.00 - 3.00
- Thames North Synod Church and Society and Racial Justice Network Event – Saturday 24th September 2022
- The URC General Assembly, Friday 8th - Monday 11th July 2022

We will be in touch with some of you in the coming days, to invite you to input into our programme. I would like to quote some words written by Revd Dr. Rowan Williams, found in the Times Newspaper on the 28th February 2022. He reminded us about the Nationality and Borders Bill which was going through the House of Lords and who had expressed strong opposition to the Bill. They voted on a series of amendments to make the Bill less hostile towards people seeking asylum and introduce routes for welcome. Discussion on the Bill in the House of Commons resumed in late March into April.

“ It is not too late to think again and to start working on how we support and honour those who have suffered more fear and deprivation than most of us can begin to imagine. We write as people of faith and we want to have faith also in our society and in our government. We are asking that we should not be bound to legislation that will make us ashamed of our nation. 'So, we embrace people in so many places and situations with love and prayer - Ukraine; The Yemen; Afghanistan; Sri Lanka: Israel and Palestine and many other places where war, conflict and civil unrest are every day experiences for so many.

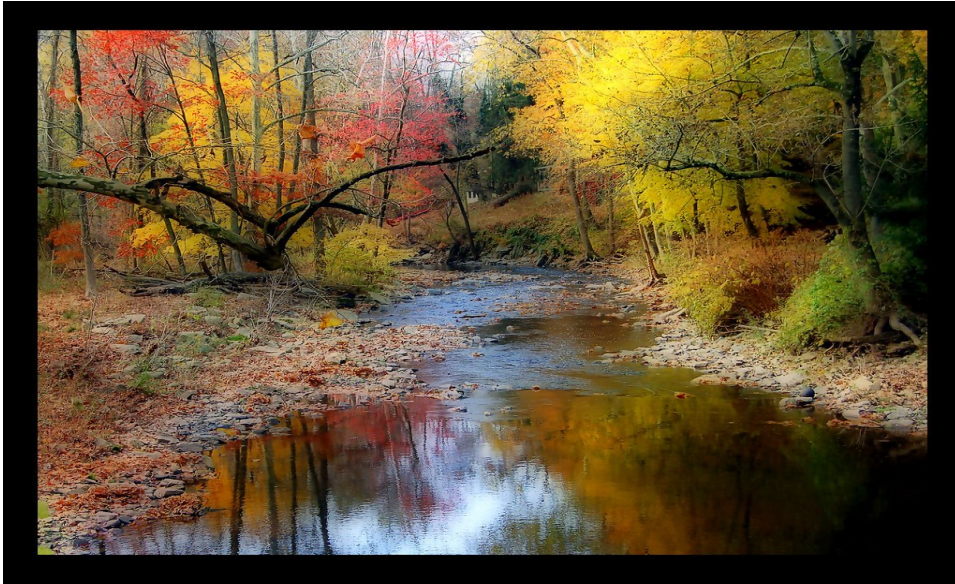
Please feel free to send in comments on this newsletter, including the theological reflections.

Thank You

Sandra Ackroyd

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A Reflection on Climate Change and Racism



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Description of climate

Simply, the climate is the weather conditions one expects in a specific area or country over a period of time. In the United Kingdom, we experience Winter, Autumn, Spring and Summer.

On the continent the weather is higher degrees in temperature but also lower temperatures which will occur randomly.

Description of change

Change can be described as something altering or modified. It could be a replacement of something or the other. Something becomes different.

It could be a sudden change over a short or extended period. In line with weather conditions, can anyone remember the snow in the 50s or 60s, or the weather in the last 5 years? Thinking of London, I wonder how much snowfall has been experienced in the last two years.

Climate change has affected nature – habitats and the mode of living for creatures great and small. It is stated that a region's climate is determined by observing its weather over a period of many years, 30 years or more. We can state that climate change describes a change in the average conditions – such as temperature and rainfall – in a region over a prolonged period of time. It seems that weather conditions in the United Kingdom have altered drastically. i.e., rising sea levels, changes in flower and plant blooming times.

Globally, climate change has taken place – even before the arrival of humans' climate has changed and continues to evolve. However, scientists have observed unusual changes recently. For example, Earth's average temperatures have been increasing much more quickly than they would expect over the past 150



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years. Some parts of earth are warming faster than others. On average global air temperatures near earth's surface have gone up about 2 degrees Fahrenheit in the past one hundred years. In fact, the past five years have been the warmest five years in centuries.

Scientists, as well as a considerable number of other people are deeply concerned about what can be described as global warming's earth climate continues to warm the intensity and amount of rainfall during storms such as hurricanes, is expected to increase. Drought and heat waves are also expected to become more intense as the climate warms. The change of temperatures by one or two degrees can have a severe impact on plants and animals.

Observation can be impactful. Certain rich countries can dump waste products including dangerous recycled oil into the sea which can damage and pollute the livelihood of many. Irrigation of oil in poor countries can have a devastating impact on counties. Oil burning without normal precautions or safeguards continue to inflict disease, death, and destitution.

In these scenarios, the rich countries and governments continuously prosper and land which was beautiful has become inhabitable for humans and natural resources as well as creatures. Those who reside in such environments are normally poor or live on a very meagre income.

Most wealthy people are not caught up in the midst of such sub standard living conditions. Dangerous plants are normally discovered in poor neighbourhoods.



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What is Classified as Racism?

It is prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism by an individual, community or institution against a person or people on the basis of their membership of a particular racial or ethnic group, typically one that is a minority or marginalized. It can also be belief that different racial groups with distinct characteristics, abilities, or qualities, especially so as to distinguish them as inferior or superior to one another.

There is Indelible proof that climate change and racism are inextricably linked. Racism is destroying our planet, and how we treat each other is structural violence against our natural world. There are fewer trees in low-income areas and racially minoritized neighbourhoods. A lack of shade is detrimental to plants and animals, promotes pollution and aids survival of pests like rodents and mosquitoes that scientists know decrease the quality of human life.

The link which reflects on climate change is, over the year resulting in serious tensions of racial injustices which have wrecked the livelihood and residing conditions of many.

In a very successful black community years ago in America, an incident occurred in which the town was burnt to the ground. It was later discovered it was a case of mistaken identity. The community was destroyed for ever. When injustice occurs among ethnic minorities it is easy to discover that the majority are discriminated against. Those who suffer most are immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. They suffer due to conditions beyond their control. The incident with Grenfell tower is a

significant one. Do we know the impact of poor-quality housing? In the same neighbourhood not too far are houses of the rich and wealthy.

Climate change may affect us all, but it affects one differently depending on where you reside and your status in community.

Theological Reflection

In order to discover a biblical link or theological reflection, we need to revisit the beginning.



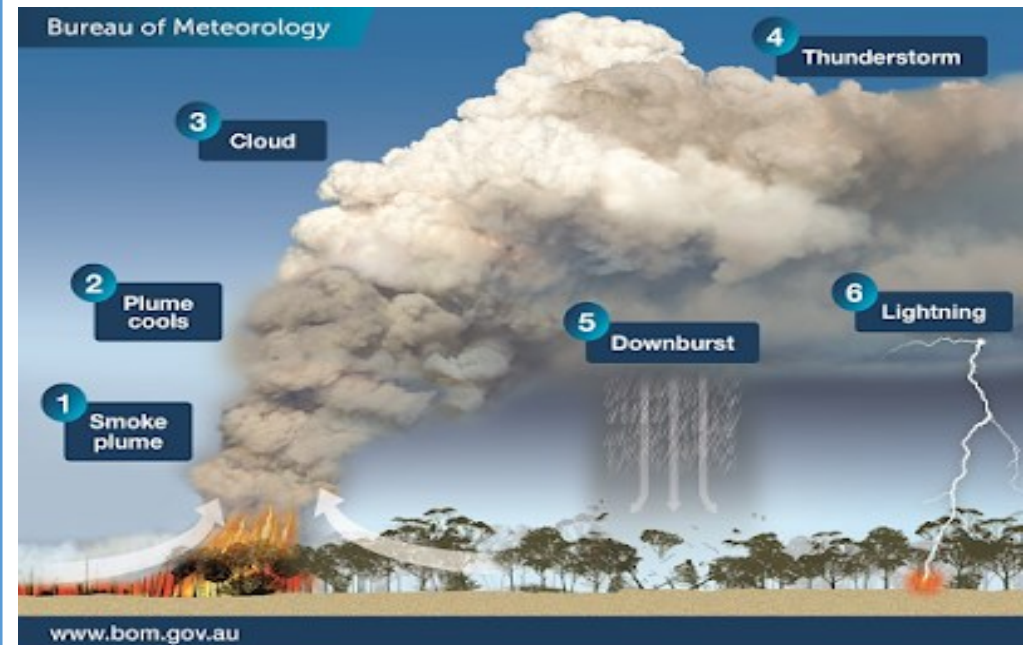
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Genesis 1 vs 27

So, God created humankind in his own image, in the image of God, he created them, male and female he created them.

If humanity is created in the image of God, why is racism, classism, gender violence, sexism and stereotypes and behaviours which are against the moral consciousness of humanity thriving in the community and at its height in the churches today. The church needs to be classified as a social secular organisation not the church of God if it fails in its responsibility. The climate has changed but who is responsible for climate change.

What are the human factors that have contributed to change in weather conditions?



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We must become familiar with villages in the continent with good forest conditions with solid trees.

Some have negotiated to buy trees for wood and leaving the villages without replanting. After a few years, the people suffer from erosion and become destitute. Family living destroyed and many become so poor. The climate did change but it was caused by human factor. It is no different to green spaces converted to houses with no amenities for the people.



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Who can we blame for this?

Generations suffer while some are rich and wealthy.

In 2022, we would expect the suffering of humanity to subside but racism like climate change is with us. The powerful oppressing the powerless. Like the church those thought weak are cut down to make room for more sustenance of the system. It is an unequal yoke. A burden that lingers and the voices are silent.

Sadly, Russia is now bombing Ukraine people are dying and suffering. The impact of this is on people, it is beyond description. The impact on the environment will take its toll. Some are treated with intense prejudice.

Racism as established, is making quick judgements on the characteristics of people to rate them inferior or superior – demonstrating partiality.

Racism is a problem we cannot ignore or shy away from. It is an issue today, and it was an issue throughout history, including when the Bible was written. When land is abused a tendency to neglect or dump on poor areas or countries is a form of racism which will cause climate change. The change which was inflicted by humanistic conditions. There are no easy answers but this calls for a serious debate from all ages and across a spectrum of individuals.

Racial discrimination exists in environmental policy and the enforcement of regulations and laws, the deliberate targeting of people, communities for toxic waste facilities, the official sanction of life – threatening presence poisons and pollutants in our communities, and the history of excluding ethnic minorities from leadership in the environmental movements.

It is believed that supremacist ideology, reinforced by some Christian theologies, helped create and perpetuate this destructive world view of “dominion” (or being in charge) over the earth and all living creatures on the earth.

WHERE IS OUR HOPE?

Does this scripture give us hope, theologically or as people who love God? Or is it a tipping scale in the presence of adversity?

The intersectionality of oppression based on race, class, gender have all contributed to the myriad issues that exist in environmental racism and the global climate crisis today. Despite all, is there hope for the earth and minoritized people of this earth?

If God has provided us with “dominion” if this is abused, will He save us or deliver the earth? (Or if God has made us custodians of the earth?).



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Questions to deliberate on.

The positive side of custodian is an area to investigate. Can it be positive or negative or both?

What aspects of racism and climate change do we need to highlight in our settings?

Do we need to challenge the impact of racism and climate change?

What other aspects can we consider?

Micro – Aggression

Micro-aggressions are a set of unconscious (sometimes conscious) behaviours often seen in the workplace, committee room or other formal or informal settings which say to an individual, that they do not belong and are not welcome. These very often take the form of insensitive comments, questions or actions which undermine confidence, questioning the right to belong, subtle insults or criticism often disguised as a joke.

Micro-aggression in the work place and any setting is an aspect that can be considered.

What is the impact of micro-aggression on an individual?

How can we be pro-active in discussing some of these issues within our gatherings?

What actions can we develop to ensure these are not ignored?

Revd Nancy Babarinde

07/03/2022.



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BITS and PIECES of CHALLENGING INFORMATION

- JPIT (Joint Public Issues Team – Baptist, Methodist, United Reformed churches)

Did you know that major UK banks and Pension Funds have invested £32 billion in companies producing nuclear weapons? Despite the UN Treaty on the Prohibition on nuclear weapons entering into force 2021, many Banks and pension funds have yet to change their policy on investment in nuclear weapons

- What does justice in my local community look like?

- ⇒ Everyone getting sufficient food ?
- ⇒ People getting equal access to good quality health care ?
- ⇒ All people being valued and treated with respect and dignity ?
- ⇒ All children and young people getting good and appropriate support in their education and that it is an equal playing field for all ?

- JPIT, in their March 2022 Newsletter, reminds us:

‘Since the horrifying conflict has broken out in Ukraine, millions of people have been displaced and many more have lost their homes and loved ones. The situation has developed rapidly and we have been encouraged by the generous flow of support from people across the UK, opening their lives and homes to Ukrainians seeking sanctuary. There is still more to do, to ensure that this approach is as accessible and safe as possible and that it is applied to all people fleeing conflict’

WITHIN and WITHOUT

Loving God

Come to us this day:

Keep love within and fear without

Keep peace within, unhelpful intentions out

Generous God:

Embrace us with your saving presence:

Keep wholeness in and dis-ease without

Keep care within and selfishness out

Sustaining God

Circle us with your Spirit:

Keep truth within and injustice out

Keep acceptance in and prejudice out.

Ocean of love

We offer up the burdens and hopes of this day

Trusting in your mercy and grace.

Raise us up to ever new life

In the name of the Rising-Up One, we pray

Amen (Michael N Jagessar)

Jubilee Freed To Live ! - Prayer Handbook 2022