



Steps to change

A journey of reflection
and transformation
looking to a richer future

#SBC Live Light

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Steps to change

Sadly, there are many forms of inequalities and injustices in our world. This is an invitation into a journey of self-challenge, understanding and education, in the area of racial injustice, with the aim of bringing about personal transformation and change.

Introduction

The journey of faith is a journey of transformation. Paul in Romans 12.2 tells us that we should not be conformed to the world and its thinking but transformed by the renewing of our minds. There are times to repent; the Greek word for which literally means to 'change your mind'. And there are times when this re-thinking becomes focused and feels necessary in response to circumstances.

The events of the last year surrounding racial justice has provoked just such a need to re-examine, and we want to provide a way to respond to that personally as part of our life at SBC, and as disciples of Jesus.



Context

At SBC, the events surrounding George Floyd's death and our decision to provide space to listen to the experiences of those from within our own community has provided just such a moment. It is not that the issue of racism and racial justice is new, but we have been awoken to its impact in a new way. The racism we are finding is not so much inter-personal as historic, deep and structural in many aspects of society.

Some of us have read Ben Lindsay's book, *'We Need to Talk about Race'*, which calls us to address any 'systemic racism', understand more about the 'whitewashing of history' and work towards 'reconciliation and inclusion'- all out of our Christian convictions about the one new humanity, expressed through various cultures, that is made possible in Christ.

Those in leadership in various denominations have also sadly acknowledged that historically the church has been complicit in racism that continues to affect their institutions to this day:

- > In February 2020 the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, said there was "no doubt" that the Church of England was still "deeply institutionally racist"
- > Rev. Dr Neville Callum is a former General Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance. The BWA represents 42 million Baptists in 121 countries. Dr Callum said that the church has a responsibility to oppose racism that still persists, even in the church. Churches that refuse to do so, he declared, are guilty of a major failing.





The Invitation

We want to invite you to a journey of reflection and transformation looking to a richer future. This will involve the challenge to recognise and acknowledge damage done to black people through centuries of injustice and discrimination. It will involve the challenge to see our own patterns of thought transformed and to take our part in looking for the transformation of society. We believe this process, that we are calling **Steps to change**, provides a framework for individuals to take personal responsibility in examining their thinking and to identify if there are areas of complicity with systems of racial injustice and prejudice. We do all of this as brothers and sisters, anticipating a future where every tongue and tribe will worship God in harmony (Rev 7.9-10).

We should not wait for the world to make changes but should take personal responsibility for making change in our own areas of influence and circle of operation.

What we hold to be essential core beliefs. We align with the totality of God's word recognising that, through study in freedom and conscience, individuals may come to different interpretations and applications of other matters that we hold to be less essential. In love we fully respect such varying points of view provided the essential core beliefs are not compromised.

The Steps to change process



“Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.”

PSALM 139.23-24

Everyone in the church, irrespective of heritage, colour or ethnicity, is invited to engage with Steps to change. Endorsing, adopting and engaging in the processes below is a way of making a personal, positive step in the journey to bring about change and transformation:



Personal examination

Look at yourself; Understand your own ethnic and cultural identity. Be aware of your own biases. Investigate how these have developed and make a commitment to change. Ask God to reveal where you have incorrect bias. Read Psalm 19.12-14.



Educate yourself

The history of discrimination and injustice is well documented; read some of the books and articles produced. Watch the films and documentaries produced. Research and analyse the statistical data available. We can, and will, provide a reading list and viewing suggestions on request.



Listen

Listen to the views and experiences of others; both from your own culture and those from other cultures.



Talk

Talk about your experiences. Talk about your lack of experience. Don't avoid the uncomfortable but be aware of the sensitivity of others, their world view and the journey they are on. Understand the differences in communication styles.



Step out

Expand your friendship circle. Get to know someone who has different ethnic and cultural heritage to you. Speak to them about their experiences. Tell them about your experiences.



Speak up

Make your voice heard in public by; signing petitions that condemn injustice, lobby your MP, join a protest or support group – keep it peaceful.



Public protest

Call out discrimination when it occurs, in whatever form it manifests itself. This is not condemnation, it's about education – be sensitive. Recognise that some people feel that they are being condemned for being white. And this makes them fearful of saying something that may be misconstrued by others. However, use your voice lovingly – silence gives the impression of acceptance and agreement.



Pray

Pray and read your Bible. Read about transformation; Romans 12.2. Listen to what the Lord says about social justice; Read Matthew 25.34-40.

Let each of us look to the Lord, examine ourselves and work towards eradicating prejudice and increasing forgiveness and grace in our lives. For we are; an extended family, growing and being transformed in Jesus Christ and sharing the good news wherever we go.





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This document has been produced by the
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