



Visions
of **Colour**

Handbook 2022

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Introduction

Visions of Colour is a resource designed for Baptist ministers and ministers-in-training to develop an awareness of, sensitivity to, and action towards issues of racial, ethnic and cultural discrimination in Baptist churches in Britain. In line with the current focus across Baptists Together on racial justice, in conversation with Baptist tradition, and reflecting on the current British social and political climate, this course requires the participants to reflect theologically and develop action plans with their churches in response to the conversation about racial, ethnic and cultural discrimination.

This course considers how the Bible forms our understanding of justice, specifically racial justice, among diverse peoples in church life and ministry. *Visions of Colour* seeks to develop further understanding of the tools and methods that can aid one's theological reflexivity, considering both the positive and more challenging aspects of methods such as Systematic Theology, Apologetics, Biblical Studies, Black Liberation Theology, Postcolonial Theology, and Critical Race Theory.

Although increasing in their influence, many people struggle to engage with progressive methodologies, seeing them as antithetical to sound biblical doctrine or an intrusion of secular politics in the sacred church space. Equally, traditional methods for seeking understanding have been dominated by European thinking and are being critiqued for maintaining a colour-blind stance that defaults to Eurocentric norms. *Visions of Colour* aims to shed light on these knowledge streams and their potential theological and practical implications.

This course provides the knowledge and space for the participants to consider these methods as bridges to understanding and tools for devising plans of action whilst engaging in the process of discernment for its outworking in local Baptist ministry.

Beyond theory, the core aim of this course is for each participant to have a clear direction for designing an action plan suited to their local church:

- What can we do on Sunday?
- What can we work on throughout the year?
- What is our long-term vision for the church on matters of justice?

The title of this course, *Visions of Colour*, was inspired by the need to re-evaluate a colour-blind approach to theology and church life. Many congregations and leaders tend to gravitate towards 'colour-blindness', believing it to be theologically sound, that it achieves a sense of equality or avoids painful and controversial conversations. Embracing colour and diversity in theology and church life, although uncomfortable for some, is the vision that we see throughout the Bible and the history of the Christian tradition. Embracing ethnic and cultural realities (past and present) whilst reading, teaching, and learning from the scriptures, combats the limitations of the colour-blind approach and challenges Christians towards a richer and fuller vision of Christ's birth, ministry, death, and resurrection.

How to use this resource

- 1 Begin by reading through this handbook; you will learn about the context and background of *Visions of Colour* and some of its foundational premises that have guided the development of this resource.
- 2 Watch the video and journal whilst your ideas, responses and questions are fresh! Do not be afraid to interrogate new ideas, challenge what you hear and explore your initial responses.
- 3 Ask your congregation to complete two short (anonymous) forms:
 - an ethnic diversity form
 - beliefs and opinions on racial justice, anti-racism and the churchThese will help you with the next step. (Although this is marked step 3, it can be performed at any time in the process, as it does not depend on you having completed steps 1 and 2).
- 4 Gather a response team to help develop your action plan for an anti-racist church. This could be the leadership team or a group of people from the congregation interested in anti-racism, diversity and equality. The shift towards anti-racism must be done *with* the church rather than *for* the church so that the shift is reflective and responsive to the unique makeup, character and qualities of your local church community.
- 5 Develop your action plan with your response team – following the guide provided. As you complete each session (Preaching, Mission, Worship, Culture, Theology), build up the plan so that your response is well-rounded and covers the various aspects of church life.

How to prepare and work with my response team

Working with the response team will require several meetings to discuss what you have learned, the data collected from your church members/attendees and to begin working out practical steps for the action plan. You could tackle each theme separately, using the action plan guide repeatedly or discuss them together and fill out one single plan.

- 1 Pray together and remind the team that anti-racism is a form of Christian love and justice. Remind the team that although it may be a challenging process, you have a common goal and are united by one Spirit.
- 2 This resource is designed for ministers in church settings, but you will find it helpful to watch the videos with your response team, followed by group discussions for initial responses.
- 3 You may find it helpful to summarise key points within each video session that you can share with your response team. These may be theological ideas, practical tips or sites in need of transformation within the life of your local church. Work together to analyse the completed forms - an evaluation guide has been provided.
- 4 Assign each team member a task to oversee to completion and schedule update chats.

Module Descriptor

In an open letter to senior leaders within Baptists Together, it was proposed that equality, diversity, and unconscious bias training become a compulsory part of initial Ministerial Formation and Continuing Ministerial Development.

Visions of Colour is one response to this proposal. It is an anti-racism resource. Anti-racism is the active process of identifying and eliminating racism by changing the culture of the organisation.

The Programme:

Visions of Colour is designed for Baptist church ministers and leaders in church settings. Its priority is to equip Baptist ministers and leaders with the theological and practical tools to begin the journey toward developing anti-racist churches. This is not to say that ministers in non-church settings will not find the material useful. The theology and reflection will apply in all settings. However, its focus is on the creation of anti-racist church communities.

The delegates of each course will:

- Gain insight and inspiration from specialists in the field of anti-racism.
- Be theologically inspired to begin developing an anti-racist church.
- Build confidence and core skills in key areas, so that course recipients can begin the journey towards developing anti-racist churches.

Course Goals

- To equip Baptist ministers to develop anti-racist churches by gently changing the church culture.

- To contribute to developing an anti-racist movement of Baptist churches.
- To enable all Baptist ministers to reflect on whiteness and its unwitting impact on shaping and influencing the culture of the church.
- To develop Baptist ministers with a passion for and commitment to engaging in the work of racial justice.

Desired Outcomes

At the end of the course, the delegates will be able to:

- Articulate the difference between a racist and anti-racist church.
- Guide the church to address attitudinal and cultural change.
- Work towards developing and implementing an anti-racist strategy with the church.
- With the congregation, measure the project's impact on an ongoing basis so that the congregation can adjust and improve their anti-racist strategies.

Course Outline

Visions of Colour is an online six-part video course. Each session includes a contribution from Baptist ministers and their thoughts about anti-racism, a learning point to help unpack key terms and ideas and a lecture that aims to challenge and equip ministers with ideas for practically engaging with anti-racism in a church setting.

- **Session one:** Anti-racism and Preaching by the Revd Phillip Lutterodt
- **Session two:** Anti-racism and Mission by the Revd Dr Israel Oluwole Olofinjana
- **Session three:** Anti-racism and Worship by Dr Pauline Muir
- **Session four:** Anti-racism and Bible by Dr Eleasah P Louis
- **Session five:** Anti-racism and Theology by Professor Anthony Reddie **(coming soon)**
- **Session six:** Anti-racism and Culture by Professor Robert Beckford **(coming soon)**

It is recommended that Baptist ministers participating in the *Visions of Colour* course respond to these lectures in the following ways:

- 800-word journal entry following each video.
- Distributing two surveys to the congregation:
 - Ethnic diversity survey
 - Beliefs and opinions on racial justice, anti-racism and the church.
- An evaluation of the surveys with church leaders, the congregation, or a group of congregants.
- An action plan for the church toward anti-racism, which should be responsive to the surveys, the journal entries and handbook content. (Also recommended to be completed in collaboration with church leaders, the congregation, or a group of congregants.)

Visions of Colour and the Bible

The *Visions of Colour* resource has its own set of presuppositions:

- Racism exists
- Racism is a sin
- All are born in the image of God (Genesis 1:26)
- All theology is contextual
- History, context, experience, culture and self-interest all play a part in the way we interpret scripture and, as a result, have an impact on our theological imagination which informs our teaching styles, methodological choices, biblical emphasis, the relational culture and structures of our churches and our bias against those that are different.
- Racist attitudes, perspectives, and infrastructures still influence how people read and interpret the Bible, our approaches to mission, the shape of our ecclesial aesthetics (ie music for worship), and our response to social justice issues.
- Baptist ministerial education is struggling to engage with theological contributions from the global south and theologians of colour in Britain in a way that considers them equal contributions.

The Bible

From a biblical perspective, ethnic and cultural diversity can be seen as foundational to the construction of the scriptures. Beyond being merely descriptive, a strong case can be made for the integral part that ethnic and cultural diversity plays in the unfolding of God's plan for humanity. There are several examples in scripture where the reader can learn valuable lessons relating to salvation by considering the details related to ethnicity and culture.

The Exodus: From Rameses to Succoth – Exodus 12:37-38 (ESV)

³⁷ *The Israelites journeyed from Rameses to Succoth, about six hundred thousand men on foot, besides children.* ³⁸ *A mixed crowd also went up with them, and livestock in great numbers, both flocks, and herds.*

Here we see with the emancipation of the Israelites is the joining of 'others', the mixed crowd creating a multicultural, multi-ethnic community from which Christ is to be birthed.

Paul Rebukes Peter at Antioch – Galatians 2:11-16 (ESV)

¹¹ *But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood self-condemned;* ¹² *for until certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But after they came, he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the*

circumcision faction. ¹³ And the other Jews joined him in this hypocrisy so that even Barnabas was led astray by their hypocrisy. ¹⁴ But when I saw that they were not acting consistently with the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas before them all, "If you, though a Jew, live like a Gentile and not like a Jew, how can you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

Jews and Gentiles Are Saved by Faith

¹⁵ We ourselves are Jews by birth and not Gentile sinners; ¹⁶ yet we know that a person is justified not by the works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law because no one will be justified by the works of the law.

In this account, we see that salvation and fellowship do not require one to conform to a baseline culture or tradition; circumcision has ethnic, religious and cultural significance to the Jews but the road to salvation carved out by Christ, by grace through faith, is the only access point for all peoples. Sometimes we are too concerned about preserving the culture of our congregation and having others conform to these cultural norms.

The Multitude from Every Nation – Revelation 7:9-17 (ESV)

⁹ After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, "Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!" ¹¹ And all the angels were standing around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹² saying,

"Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen."

¹³ Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, "Who are these, clothed in white robes, and from where have they come?" ¹⁴ I said to him, "Sir, you know." And he said to me, "These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

¹⁵ "Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple; and he who sits on the throne will shelter them with his presence.

¹⁶ They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any scorching heat.

¹⁷ For the Lamb in the midst of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of living water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

In Christ's revelation to John, it is detailed that in the fulness of salvation and glory, ethnic and cultural diversity is still a reality; brothers and sisters from all walks of life, with different ethnicities, languages, contexts, and experiences, are redeemed through faith.

Glossary

Racism – Racism is the beliefs and attitudes that consider a people group superior to others based on their ethnicity. Racism leads to racial discrimination, which is experienced in personal interaction but is also experienced through the systems and institutions that shape our society.

Anti-Racism – anti-racism is the intentional, overt strategy to challenge racism and actively seek justice for those experiencing discrimination.

Decolonisation – Decolonisation takes various forms, but at its heart is the intention to challenge, resist or dismantle the legacy of colonialism embedded in society at both the systemic and personal levels. It rejects Eurocentric normativity and seeks all people from all ethnicities, creeds and cultures to participate in the development of society – as equals.

Epistemologies - Epistemology, or the theory of knowledge (how do we know what we know), is the branch of philosophy concerned with knowledge. Epistemology is considered a major subfield of philosophy, along with other major subfields such as ethics, logic, and metaphysics.

Critical Race Theory is an intellectual and social concept birthed in North America that examines various aspects of society through the lens of race. Its basic premise is that 'race' is socially constructed – humans have genetically categorised other humans for personal and systemic gain. With this as a basic premise, CRT seeks to uncover how racism has and continues to shape society, such as in law, education, and religion.

The three P's of Decolonisation

Power – Decolonisation calls for the dismantling or reform of historic colonial structures and institutions to share power among all participants from all communities.

Presence – Decolonisation calls for the recognition of the presence of the 'other': non-white peoples that have made significant contributions to the shaping of society in the case of British contexts. It also considers ways in which the presence of the 'other' critiques the existing power structures.

Participation – Decolonisation demands a seat at the table for the 'other' to participate in shaping their experiences in society. This would be an equal contribution that accepts contextualised and nuanced presuppositions, knowledge forms and outcomes.

Action Plan Guide

This module aims to help ministers develop action plans suited to the church in which they serve. Each church has a unique makeup of ethnicities, cultures and classes, contributing to how the church engages with racism and anti-racism.

In keeping with Baptist principles, it is vital that the minister engages the congregation's participation for part of this process. For example, it may be in a church meeting, a small group or a specially designated justice group that can help develop a concrete action plan that speaks to your context.

REFLECT

EVALUATE

RESEARCH

TAKE ACTION!

1 Journal Entries

Following each lecture, complete an 800-word journal entry to help process your initial response and develop ideas for your action plan.

Some helpful questions:

- What did I learn in this lecture? A new concept? A new perspective? New information?
- What did I find challenging? Did I disagree with a point or perspective? If so why? Did I feel convicted? Do I lack clarity?

- What valuable tips did I pick up? Can any of these ideas be applied to my ministry and church setting?
- How have I been changed by what I have learned?
- What do I want to think or learn more about?
- Other general comments or observations

2 Congregation Survey

Can be distributed before, during or after watching the video sessions. Find a time that best suits your planned church activities.

- Ethnic diversity survey (a separate document)
- Beliefs and opinions on racial justice and anti-racism and the church (a separate document)

Beliefs and Opinions on Racial Justice, Anti-racism and the Church

This short survey has open and closed questions and is designed to gain an initial understanding of your congregation's ideas about racism, Christianity and the Church. We have produced it in a questionnaire format, but these questions can also be explored in a small group discussion providing notes are made to ensure that it influences the final action plan.

a Do you think racism is an issue in Britain? Yes/No

Explain: _____

b Do you think racism is an issue in your church? Yes/No

Explain: _____

c What do you think God thinks about racism? _____

d Do you think it is fair to say the Church or Christianity is racist? Yes/No

Explain: _____

e Do you feel confident in talking to and including people from different ethnic backgrounds in the church setting? Yes/No

Explain: _____

f Does it matter what colour Jesus is when portrayed in images? Yes/No

Explain: _____

g Can you think of anywhere in the Bible that talks about different cultures or ethnicities? Yes/No

Give example(s): _____

h How do conversations about racism make you feel?

i What does anti-racism mean to you?

j Are there ways your church could improve on being more inviting and hospitable?

k How do you feel about your church engaging with racial justice issues?

l Do you have any other comments or opinions you would like to share with your minister about racism, social justice, the church and Christianity?

3 Evaluation Guide

Below are several questions to help you evaluate what the survey is telling you about your congregation's opinions and beliefs on racial justice:

- How do the responses hold up against what you have been taught in the *Visions of Colour* lectures? (You can reflect on your journal entries or notes to help with this)
- Are there any patterns in the responses? A consensus on a particular question?
- Are there gaps in knowledge?
- Are there any responses that stand out? Why does it stand out? What could this mean?
- Are you getting any sense of an internal conflict among the responses? For example, is there an issue or question that shows a significant sample from the group have one idea and another significant group have a conflicting response?
- Are there any practical suggestions that the church could readily employ?
- Are there any suggestions that are beyond the capacity of the church? (Finance, resource, ability, facility)
- How do the responses stand in light of the church's vision/mission statement?
- What do the responses tell you about the theological stances within the congregation? Does it match up with your theological stance or what is advertised as the church's statement of faith?

4 Developing an Action Plan

An action plan for developing an anti-racist church specific to your congregation must consider theology, attitude, and behaviour. Together these form the basis for anti-racist action.

- What existing theological perspectives do we need to challenge and change to be anti-racist?
- What existing attitudes and perspectives do we need to challenge and change to be anti-racist?
- What existing behaviours, activities and 'in-house systems' do we need to challenge and change to be anti-racist?

See '*Visions of Colour* Action Plan' document for template.

Recommended Resources

Bantu, Vince (2020) *A Multitude of all People's: engaging Ancient Christianity's Global Identity*

For something that considers young people and the millennial generation

Beckford, Robert (2022) 'After the Flood: The Church, Slavery and Reconciliation' [Video] in partnership with Movement for Justice and Reconciliation' Available at: www.mjr-uk.com/aftertheflood.html

Clare Williams at Get Real 123 (2021) 'Is Christianity a White Man's Religion?' A conversation with Felix Aremo [YouTube] Available at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=dDGEGCziplw

Gay, Jerome (2020) *The Whitewashing of Christianity: a hidden past, a hurtful present and a hopeful future*

BUGB and CBTI have a helpful list of resources:

Jagessar, Michael (2015) *Ethnicity: the inclusive church resource*

Baptist Union of Great Britain's 'Racial Justice Issues' webpages
www.baptist.org.uk/racialjusticeissues

Olofinjana, Israel Oluwole (2021) *Discipleship, suffering and Racial Justice: mission in a pandemic world*

Churches Together in Britain and Ireland's 'Racial Justice' webpage
www.ctbi.org.uk/racialjustice

Roach, Jason and Jessamin Birdsall (2022) *Healing the Divides: How every Christian can advance God's vision for racial unity and justice*

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