



United Reformed Church

Committee for Racial Justice
and Multicultural Ministry

Charter for the Church

Resolution 19

Assembly welcomes and adopts the document 'Charter for the Church' and encourages those responsible for the appointment or nomination of members of all the councils of the church to become more aware of the issues and to follow its recommendations.

Preamble to the Charter:

In 1987 the General Assembly, after debating various principles regarding racism, adopted the Declaration on Racism and commended it for study and action, and as a future point of reference, throughout the Church. In the same year the (London) Urban Churches Support Group took up the challenge and carried out a survey among the churches within Thames North and Southern Provinces to see how the churches were faring along the line of multiracial involvement within the life of our Church. The results gave us cause to celebrate the human wealth of our churches ever since then under the title "Cause for Celebration". Out of several such gatherings has come the Charter for the Church for our growth in non-racial, multi-ethnic discipleship in the United Reformed Church. In it we speak to ourselves as congregations, Districts and Provinces, as mixed and as monochrome churches, about leadership with black representation at all levels within the URC.

Text of the Charter:

SUMMARY AND TARGETING

Recognising that progress in non-racial participation in the church is being achieved, in view of the need for that participation to be extended to "management" functions, we ask that:

- the structure of agendas and choices made regarding representation at all levels of the Church be reviewed and monitored for discrimination;
- there be a review of recruitment processes, and the encouragement of black participation in consultations, committees and councils, and appropriate people enabled to participate, such that the membership reflects, through deliberate choice, the real nature of our churches;
- there be a quicker recognition of the gifts of black people;
- training for recognised ministries be monitored, and leadership from black groups be encouraged and supported.

LOCAL CHURCHES

Ministers should be firm in confronting prejudice and fear of change, and should be willing to encourage black candidates to ministry.

More training should be given to black people at all levels of ministry within the URC.

It should be more widely known that money is available for this training equal with that for other candidates applying for training, at whatever level.

Racism is based on assumption, so one must never assume that black people are not willing or capable of doing things in the church.

All people need to be asked and encouraged to join fully in the life of the Church, and local churches need to consider the work patterns and family commitments of their congregations, and ensure that the timing of meetings of all kinds maximises the number of people able to attend.

BLACK REPRESENTATION AT DISTRICT COUNCIL

The District Council represents the local churches in a District, grouped together for purposes of fellowship, support, intimate mutual oversight, and united action.

The church members who met at Golders Green in 1991 and at Stockwell Green in 1992 reported that black people are still not sharing in any of the official presentations at District Council level, and that some District Councils have no black representation, even though there is a 90% black membership in some of our inner city churches.

We ask that more proportional black involvement and active representation at District level be both a goal and a commitment in all our Districts.

Pastoral Visitation to churches has tended to be from white outsiders, often with little knowledge of the local environment. We ask that steps be taken to address this concern and that black people be involved in pastoral visitations to local churches.

Districts are asked to examine the location, pattern and timing of their Councils in order that the above concerns may be implemented.

BLACK REPRESENTATION AT PROVINCIAL SYNOD

The Provincial Synod unites and represents local churches and District Councils, and is that gathering within the URC where policies and decisions can be looked at and discussed. Points of decision may also be reached and referred to Assembly, and matters received from Assembly may also be disseminated through the Synod. Representation to Synod is worked on a quota system whereby certain individuals from various churches are elected to attend for a certain period. Ministers have an automatic right to attend. Synods should monitor representation, and report on this throughout the Province.

Effective information should be circulated about the nature, powers, and conduct of the Synod, and about such matters as repayment of expenses and child care.

Help could also be offered concerning feedback to local congregations, and Church Meetings should ensure adequate preparation, so that their Representatives may feel confident in their duties.

BLACK REPRESENTATION AT ASSEMBLY

General Assembly embodies the unity of the URC and acts as the final authority in matters of doctrine and order and all other concerns of our common life: it is here that decisions and resolutions are made and approved for the running of the life of the URC. Since the Declaration on Racism was adopted by General Assembly in May 1987, and the promise, pledge and

commitment were made that the URC would, in plain words, do something about the lack of involvement of black people in this Assembly, we have found no change or improvements.

We therefore ask that black representation at the General Assembly of the URC be put on the Assembly agenda for serious consideration and action.

Southern and Thames North