

# Racist Organisations

May 2011



## **Racist Organisations**

At the 2010 General Assembly the Convener of the Church and Society Council was asked about whether the Church of Scotland should have a policy with regard to racist organisations, following decisions made by other denominations. The Convener replied by saying that he had some sympathy with the point of view being expressed but that he was not prepared to make up policy on the floor of the Assembly. This issue was brought to the attention of the Council, who now submit this considered report.

### **Context**

There is evidence that extreme racism remains present in society and that over the past decade racist movements have become better organised and gained following, on the streets as well as at the ballot box.

Two British Churches – the Methodist Church and the Church of England – have responded by publicly and clearly articulating an emphatic rejection of racist politics and social movements, and have gone so far as to make statements along the lines of which it is incompatible to be a member of their Church and a member or active supporter of a racist organisation or movement.

The Church and Society Council recommends that the Church of Scotland adopts a similar policy.

### **Church Teaching on Racism**

In 1968 the World Council of Churches meeting in Uppsala stated that:

‘Racism is a blatant denial of the Christian faith

1. It denies the effectiveness of the reconciling work of Jesus Christ, through whose love all human diversities lose their divisive significance
2. It denies our common humanity in creation and our belief that all people<sup>1</sup> are made in God’s image
3. It falsely asserts that we find our significance in terms of racial identity rather than in Jesus Christ’

We commend this statement, and invite the whole Church to reaffirm its wholehearted support for it.

### **Islamophobia and Anti-Semitism**

We believe that some racist organisations and movements are using religion as a proxy for race in their rhetoric and action. In particular we are concerned at the violent targeting of Muslim and Jewish property and communities.

The Church of Scotland is committed to inter-faith dialogue and relationships. We deplore the words and actions of those individuals and groups who seek to stir up religious hatred and division in our society.

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<sup>1</sup> We have substituted the word ‘people’ for the word ‘men’ which was included in the 1968 report.

## **The Church of Scotland**

We hope that this report will be a clear indication that the Church of Scotland acknowledges that racism and religious hatred is fundamentally incompatible with what it teaches and believes.

The Church and Society Council invites all people involved in the life of the Church of Scotland to reflect on what the Bible says and Jesus taught about racism and what this means for politics and social issues in Scotland today. The Council is asked to work with others to prepare resources to help individuals and congregations reflect on these issues.

We urge people who are involved in the life of the Church and who are a member of or express, promote or solicit support for a political party or other organisation whose constitution, objectives, activities, policies or public statements incite racism or religious hatred to consider with the utmost seriousness whether or not their religious beliefs in the truth of the Christian faith and their political beliefs are compatible.

The Church and Society Council, working with the Scottish Churches' Racial Justice Group, will remain vigilant on the issue of racism in politics and wider society and will seek to continue to develop how Churches respond to this challenge. We continue to commend the annual commemoration of Racial Justice Sunday and invite congregations to re-commit to this ecumenical initiative.

## Accepted Deliverances:

- Note with concern the recent reported escalation in sectarianism in Scotland.
- Express thanks to those in the Church working so hard to engage with this complex issue.
- Instruct the Council, after consultation with other Councils, Committees, Presbyteries and Kirk Sessions, to report to the General Assembly of 2012 on their work in relation to sectarianism.
- Declare in principle that membership of, participation within or support of any organisation which advocates less favourable treatment of people on grounds of colour, nationality or ethnic or national origin is incompatible with membership of the Church of Scotland and that the holding of beliefs that people of ethnicities other than one's own are inferior is incompatible with the Christian faith;
- Urge all members of the Church of Scotland to examine their beliefs about attitudes towards people of ethnicities other than their own.
- Reaffirm support for the World Council of Churches' statement on racism agreed at Uppsala in 1968.
- Instruct the Church and Society Council to work with ecumenical partners and others to produce resources to help individuals and congregations engage with issues of racial justice in politics and society.
- Commend the annual celebration of Racial Justice Sunday, and encourage congregations and presbyteries to observe it.