

Proposal for a Diocesan Link with Jamaica & The Cayman Islands

Background: Initial Proposal

As part of the national celebrations to mark the 75th anniversary of the arrival of HMV Empire Windrush¹, the Archbishop of Canterbury invited the archbishop and bishops of the West Indies to the UK, and the Diocese of Oxford was honoured to host Archbishop Howard Gregory during that week of events.

In July 2023, following the visit, Archbishop Howard contacted Bishop Steven with the proposal of a 'Companion Relationship' between our two dioceses. The proposal was based on a sense that such a link offered the potential for 'mutually enriching relationship'.

Archbishop Howard noted a variety of factors that might be of interest in exploring a link:

- A shared interest in Science and Theology, expressed through work on the Anglican Commission on Science
- The opportunity for the educational institutions of the Diocese of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands to further their work on STEM education through engagement with the human and material resources in Oxford.
- A shared interest in engaging around issues of justice across diverse racial and cultural lines, and across national boundaries.
- An interest in exploring Anglican identity and maintaining Anglican unity while affirming diversity and tolerance

Significance of the Proposed Link in its Global Historical Context

The proposal was itself significant. In his correspondence, Archbishop Howard explained that, mindful of the history of transatlantic slavery, colonialism and racial injustice, the Diocese of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands has for several decades observed a moratorium on any links with a Church of England diocese. This decision was based on the perception that a link held a real danger of, 'taking on a character of benevolence/dependence which was inimical to a wholesome and mutually enriching and transformative relationship'. The very warm welcome of the West Indies delegation by the CofE, our hospitality, and our diocesan commitment to a greater attention to matters of racial justice, seen most visibly in the appointment of Revd Polly Falconer to the post of Racial Justice Adviser, led Archbishop Howard to take the significant step of proposing the exploration of a link relationship with Oxford Diocese.

When considering this proposal, it is extremely important that we as a diocese are conscious both of the significance of this approach, the length of time and depth of shared history, along with the tragic repetition of racial injustice and rejection, not just in past centuries but also much more recently by state and also the CofE. Remembrance, truth and reconciliation will be central to any genuine development of a relationship. So from the outset, as we consider this invitation, it is important that the major headlines of that history are at the forefront of our minds when making a decision and responding to the approach that has been made:

¹ The River Windrush, after which this ship was named, runs through the Diocese of Oxford.

- British transcontinental slavery transported West Africans to the Caribbean and also to and from the UK to the Caribbean
- The Diocese of Jamaica was established in 1824 (so the visiting team at Easter was able to join in celebrations of their 200th anniversary), but in fact Church of England ministers were deployed to Jamaica at the outset of British rule in the 1660s. Church ministers came under the administration of the government authorities in Jamaica, and the church was seen as an ally of the slave-owning interest in the region. It wasn't until the 18th century that a concerted effort began to establish an Anglican church to minister to the slave population.
- In the UK, severe racism was a common experience for the Windrush Generation who had been actively encouraged to emigrate to help fill the post-war labour shortage. Tragically, Jamaican Anglicans also experienced racism and rejection from the CofE and left to join and set up other denominations.
- More recently some of that generation of migrants to the UK have been wrongfully deported in what has become known as the Windrush Scandal. News of this all too familiar tragic repetition of history continues to be keenly heard and felt by relatives back in the Caribbean.

It is no wonder that, under these circumstances, the Diocese of Jamaica has had concerns about links. Front and centre of Archbishop Howard's letter to us was the request that there be, 'meaningful engagement of Anglicans from our different contexts around issues of justice across diverse racial and cultural lines'.

The confidence that our potential partners are prepared to place in us is an honour, and we hope that the partnership will pave the way for further links between Caribbean and English dioceses in the future.

Significance of the Proposed Link in its Local Context

Another particularly exciting element of this potential link is that there are, in Oxford Diocese, a significant number of people lay and ordained who are children and grandchildren of the Windrush Generation. This is true of Polly Falconer, who is part of the group doing the initial scoping of the link, and Janet Binns, who is also interested in being part of its development. The new link, therefore, brings the potential not only for new partners overseas, but also for an affirmation of the shared history experienced by a number of people in our diocese, and for the entry of new people in leadership roles for world mission within our own diocese.

Where the new link fits in terms of strategy

In all our world church work, the Council for Partnership in World Mission is seeking to raise awareness of the theological and practical importance of our partnerships, to encourage prayer with and for our partners, and to foster deep partnerships which enrich our and our partners' mission and ministry.

With respect to this link, we particularly hope to see:

- **Awareness**
 - Awareness of the theological significance of our connections as part of the world church – and specifically in this instance our interconnectedness not only in Christ but in our shared history
 - Shared reflection around the legacy of colonialism and racism as it has affected and continues to affect our church cultures and the image of Anglicanism – including

reflection on how we address the impact of historical monuments, preserving the history of the church whilst acknowledging the brokenness they reflect and the need for healing.

- Clarity about the need for our partners' perspectives to be embedded in the way we reflect theologically about questions that are of common interest
 - Appreciation of the wide range of gifts and challenges that the Diocese of Jamaica and the Caymans Islands brings
- **Flourishing prayer**
 - Drawing on the rich traditions of prayer and music in Jamaica to enrich our worship
 - Learning from the way the Diocese of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands is using online worship to increase participation
 - Sharing in prayer in ways that cross cultural boundaries and/or that focus on particular areas of concern to us and our partners
 - **Deep relationships through partnership in prayer, mission and ministry**
 - Building relationships in Christ that are fully authentic and mutually sustaining – being aware that this is an initial priority for ++Howard and that relationship-building is, itself, a powerful statement given elements of our shared history. This will involve a commitment to both truth-telling and respect.
 - Relationships that strengthen our service of Christ, contributing to the flourishing of prayer, mission and ministry in each person's context – looking at the areas mentioned below and how they can influence each diocese's thought, reflection, prayer and action.

Ways of working and areas of interest

Correspondence, online meetings and the Easter visit have resulted in the clarification of key ways that we anticipate working together and six content areas to explore.

Ways of working

Archbishop Howard has proposed prioritising relationship building at the outset, and all are agreed that this will be vital for future work together. Some of this will be through in-person exchanges, for which Archbishop Howard has expressed a strong preference where possible, especially as we get to know each other's contexts. He and all involved are, however, also in favour of substantial use of opportunities to meet online for joint learning, study, and worship, as these will enable more people to get involved without breaking our budget. Polly has experience of parish-based cross-continental contextual Bible study, which we hope to undertake. We have also been particularly struck by the success of the Diocese of Jamaica and the Cayman Island's use of online worship to reach large numbers of people and look forward to both learning from it and sharing in it.

Some of the online sharing we anticipate occurring in the context of this link alone; some in the context of shared projects that include a variety of our links and world church partners.

In all that we do, our commitment to authenticity and mutuality will be at the forefront.

Areas of interest to explore

1. Shared History and Racial Justice Work

As noted above, we have already discussed some areas to explore together – such as how we deal with historical monuments. We anticipate that many other questions and opportunities will emerge from our discussions and friendships.

2. Science and religion

The Anglican Communion Science Commission, of which Bishop Steven is co-chair, anticipates staging a consultation on Science and Theology in the Province of the West Indies, in which a member of the Province of the West Indies, Dr. Derrick Aarons, will participate. There is a possibility that someone from our diocese may also be able to attend. The work of the commission will provide an initial platform for our explorations.

3. Education – schools and adult theological education

Each of our dioceses has an extensive network of church schools, and there is huge potential for mutual sharing and learning. One element which emerged in the visit was sharing of best practice relating to school devotions/acts of worship and to ways of connecting the ministry of churches with that of schools. This could involve sharing online by both teachers and students.

Another priority for the Diocese of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands is exploring shared learning around STEM education, which is a priority for both the Jamaican and UK governments. From our side, this may involve drawing in our Department of Education and others in our diocese with educational expertise.

4. Environment and climate change

Both here and in Jamaica, Christians and their churches are taking practical action in response to the environmental and climate crises – whether that is Jamaican churches' investing in metal water bottles or UK churches' reducing their carbon footprint or participating in schemes to promote biodiversity.

We hope to:

- provide opportunities for people interested in this area to meet online (members of the K and K diocese have attended the Green Shoots group and have a small WhatsApp group to share ideas and information)
- undertake shared Bible study and reflection around the Fifth Mark of mission through online contextual Bible studies and the online 'Five Marks of Mission' lectures/discussions envisioned for late 2024 or 2025. We hope these initiatives will draw not only on interested clergy and lay people from both dioceses, but also on environmental theologians from both dioceses.
- share the ways that climate impacts are affecting each diocese and draw on information shared about impacts in the Caribbean to inform our climate advocacy in the UK

5. Involvement of young people

We aim to ensure that young people’s voices are an integral part of the activities of the link. On our side, we will work with the youth team to build in opportunities for young people throughout our programme, with the aim of ensuring that young people participating in the link have the value of their faith and their opinions affirmed and are encouraged to grow and mature in their faith. We particularly are interested in exploring how our two dioceses and the others with which Oxford is linked can share mutual learning on how to encourage continued participation of young people after confirmation and how to grow vocations in the widest sense.

6. Anglican unity across the Communion

The Diocese of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands is committed to “maintaining the unity of the Anglican Communion while affirming differences and tolerance as foundational to the maintenance of the Unity of the Church”. Archbishop Howard has expressed the wish for us to leave this element of our discussions until later in the relationship, feeling that we first need to recognise our commonalities and build up trust with one another.

Learning from other links

All links are contextual, and one cannot simply extrapolate lessons learned in one to guide thought and action on another. That said, there are a few key lessons learned which may be useful, including:

- **The importance of multi-layered relationships**
Relationships between bishops are vital – but it is important to have relationships also between link chairs, people with similar roles in the different dioceses, and people at the local level. This is particularly vital when it comes to planning for the continuation of the link as key people on either side move on.
- **The need for cross-cultural training**
Working across cultures offers huge enrichment, but requires a level of self-awareness, cultural sensitivity, and recognition of unconscious (and conscious) biases and assumptions. The PWM Council is looking at how we increase opportunities for cross-cultural training for people working in all our links.
- **Sensitivity to different ways of working**
Across our partners, there is huge variation in the way decisions are made (in some dioceses, all decisions must run through the bishop; in others, authority is delegated), the extent to which connections are relational or transactional, expectations of people in equivalent roles, etc. Getting to know each other’s ways of working is as important, in the first instance, as anything we do.
- **Ensuring appropriate connections that enable both depth and breadth of engagement, and that provide ‘ways in’ for learning to influence within churches and within the diocese as a whole**
It is vitally important that we structure our activities to enable engagement at a variety of levels – from one-off sharing in events to sustained work together. We will aim to ensure that connections include people with responsibility for disseminating learning on both sides of the link.

Governance and Funding

Procedure for Linking

At its Easter Week Synod, the Diocese of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands approved the link in principle, subject to confirmation by the Diocese of Oxford's Synod. A first version of this report went to the Council for Partnership in World Mission and the UKME Oversight Group, both of which have approved it with minor comments incorporated into this draft of the paper.

We intend to work with the Diocese of Jamaica and the Cayman Islands on a Memorandum of Understanding which will govern the new link, can be ratified at the appropriate point by the two dioceses. We anticipate that this memorandum will establish the link, set out its objectives, and call for a five-year review period (as is standard with our links and recommended by the Church of England's guidance for links).

Link Committee

This link is the first to be established since videoconferencing has become widely available. Recognising that technology does now make it possible for us to hold joint meetings, the proposal is that the link has a joint link committee which meets online, with members drawn from both dioceses, and joint chairs, one from each diocese. The chair from Oxford Diocese will be appointed following the appointment of the chair from the Diocese of Jamaica and Cayman Islands.

We would anticipate that the number of members from the UK would be around five or six, with subgroups – drawing on advisors outside the main link committee - formed as necessary to work on particular areas of activity. Link committee members will be expected to have an initial term of three years. The key member of diocesan staff with responsibility for supporting the link chair and link group will be the Bishop's Chaplain, the Reverend Paul Cowan.

Relationship with PWM

The diocesan Council for Partnership in World Mission holds delegated authority from the Diocesan Synod for our side of our world church partnerships. The joint chair from the UK side will be an ex officio member of PWM Council, and the Terms of Reference will be adapted as necessary to enable this; as with all links, the link committee will report to Council on link activities and can raise at Council any questions that go beyond the link itself which it wishes to raise more generally. The joint chair from the UK side will be asked to submit an annual budget proposal for that portion of the link budget which comes from the Synod allocation for Partnership in World Mission, and to participate with other link chairs and council members in budget discussions.

Funding

Every year, Oxford Diocesan Synod allocates a set amount of funding to the Council for Partnership in World Mission. This amount is currently based on the 2023 allocation with inflationary increases.

In January of each year, link chairs are requested to submit a budget proposal, setting out plans and costs, for work in the subsequent year. Some links have multi-year plans, which are updated as appropriate. The PWM Treasurer and PWM Officer are available for consultation in the planning process, and the PWM Treasurer prepares a budget based on the submissions.

Increasing costs of travel and the growing amount of joint work mean that none of the links can rely solely on the Synod allocations for their programmes; all seek external funding from other sources, whether parishes, schools, individuals, or grant-making bodies.

The PWM Treasurer has allocated £4,250 for further exploration of the link in 2024. For 2025, the current allocation is £7,500, as work that had already been planned by other links prior to the exploration of this link has reduced the amount available. We will explore the possibility of approaching the Racial Justice Unit and/or other bodies for external funding to assist with travel to the UK if necessary and appropriate, but may, because of the unusual circumstances in 2025, need slightly more diocesan funding. From 2026 onwards, our budgets will be made with a consciousness of all four links and the Synod allocation will be divided among the links in response to their budget proposals.

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