



Reimagining Race?

A better conversation about racism today

‘I can’t breathe.’

In the wake of George Floyd’s murder and an international surge of the Black Lives Matter movement, how might we lament together, seek healing, and find hope for a unified witness?

It’s time to stop perpetuating the idea that we have to choose between believing ‘Black lives matter’ or ‘all lives matter’. Time to move past the tired binary of systemic injustice versus personal responsibility. Time to stop playing the blame game while nothing changes, sitting in silent collusion.

Like the prophets of old, we need eyes to see through the flames to ‘the fire that has been raging for over 400 years, consuming successive generations of Black lives’, as Bishop of Willesden Lusa Nsenga-Ngoy so vividly reminds us. We need ears to hear in the riots the cries of the unheard, as Martin Luther King Jr declared a generation ago.

This is not simply someone else’s issue. As Azariah France-Williams revealed in his book *Ghost Ship*, institutional racism continues here in the UK, requiring reform among Christians so the whole UK church can truly become a place of Black flourishing.

We all agree, racism is evil and an affront to God. So how will we play our part? And what practices on our frontlines will support this overdue reformation?

It’s time to come together as equals at the foot of the cross on which Christ was lynched and find healing. It’s time to discover a hopeful witness foreshadowing the racial unity-in-diversity of a world made new.

THE SPEAKERS



Revd Denis Adide

**Vicar, St Stephen & St Thomas Church,
Shepherd's Bush**

Denis was born in Northern Uganda and came to London as a child. His blog denisadide.com is dedicated to commentary and poetry contemplating society, faith, race, and politics. You can learn more about his vision for St Stephen's and the joys and challenges of being a black clergyman in [this interview](#) for Horton and Garton.



Chine McDonald

Director of Theos

Chine is a regular contributor to BBC Religion & Ethics programmes, including Thought for the Day. Before her current role as Director of the religion and society think tank Theos, Chine was Head of Community Fundraising and Public Engagement with Christian Aid. Her second book is [God Is Not a White Man and Other Revelations](#).

THE HOST



Dr Dave Benson

Culture & Discipleship Director, LICC

Dave is a leading thinker and researcher on the role of faith in 21st-Century Western culture. Formerly a lecturer at Malyon Theological College, he now heads up our work for Culture & Discipleship. In his own words, his mission is 'to cultivate disciples with wisdom for the way of Christ in a post-Christendom culture'.

HOW TO USE THIS DISCUSSION GUIDE

Use this guide with a group by watching the recorded video of LICC's 'Reimagining Race?' event and pausing when prompted to discuss and reflect.

The original event took place over one evening, but take as long as you need to cover the material in this guide. You might want to cover parts one and two in one session, and three and four in another.

Find the video online at
licc.org.uk/reimagining-race



Mural at George Floyd Memorial, Minneapolis, Minnesota. Painted by community artists, Cadex Herrera, Greta McLain, and Xena Goldman.

INTRODUCTION TO THE TOPIC

WATCH

Watch the [video](#) from the beginning up to 00:10:02.
In this section, Dave sets the scene for the conversation.

REFLECTION

- Q. What did you first think and feel when you heard about George Floyd's death, suffocating under the knee of a policeman sworn to protect and serve?**
- Q. If 'belonging' – beyond accessibility, diversity, and inclusion – is getting your voice heard at the table, then how welcoming of minority ethnicities is your community? Why?**
- Q. What does it mean to you to follow Christ in such a racially divided moment?**



Part One: Lament

LITURGY OF LAMENT

WATCH

Watch the [video](#) from 00:16:12 up to 00:22:00.

In this section, Denis Adide leads our liturgy, drawing from the biblical language in the books of Lamentations and Zechariah.

INSTRUCTIONS

As Denis leads the liturgy, join Chine in responding with the words in bold.

How deserted lies the city
Once so full of people

How like a widow is she

Who once was great among the nations

She who was queen among the
provinces

Has now become a slave

Bitterly she weeps at night

Tears on her cheeks

There is no one to comfort her

All her siblings have betrayed her

They have become her enemies

She dwells among the nations

She finds no resting place

Her foes have become her masters

Her enemies are at ease

Her children are in exile

Captives before their foe

Sinfulness is bound into a yoke

By human hands woven together

They have been hung on his neck

Bent knees have sapped his breath

This is why she weeps

And her eyes overflow with tears

**She called to her allies
But they betrayed her.**

Arise and cry out in the night
As the watches of the night begin
Pour out your heart like water
In the presence of the Lord!
Lift up your hands to him
**For the lives of your children
Who faint from hunger
At every street corner.**

Young and old lie together in the dust
In the dust of the streets;
**Young men and women
Have fallen by the sword.**

Their inheritance has been turned over to
strangers

Their homes to foreigners,
**They have become fatherless
Their mothers have become widows**
They must buy water to drink
And wood at a high price
**Those who pursue them are at their
heels
They are weary and find no rest.**

Daughters have been violated in Zion
And virgins in the towns of Judah
**Princes have been lynched
Hung up by their hands**

The people have stopped their music
**Joy is gone from their hearts
And dancing has turned to mourning.**

ACCUSATION: WHAT DO YOU SEE?

WATCH

Watch the [video](#) from 00:22:00 up to 00:23:40.

INSTRUCTIONS

As Denis leads the liturgy, join Chine in responding with the words in bold.

To crush underfoot all prisoners of the land
To deny people their rights before the Most High,
To deprive them of Justice –
Would not the Lord see such things?

Our eyes will flow unceasingly, without relief,
Until the Lord looks down from heaven and sees
When what we see truly brings grief to our souls

WATCH

Watch the [video](#) from 00:23:40 up to 00:28:46.

In this section, Christians across the UK recite Revd Canon Lusa Nsenga-Ngoy's poem, 'What Do You See?'

What Do You See?

Tell me, what do you see
when you watch Minneapolis
burning?

An unruly mob spreading
violence and chaos?

When you look at the images
of buildings ablaze, what do
you see?

Destruction and looting?

Look closer. Look deeper.
Beyond the charred remains
of buildings, beyond the
shattered glass.

Look closer. Look deeper.
Into the flames. Look through
the smoke.

What do you see?

Do you see the fire that has
been raging for over 400
years, consuming successive
generations of black lives?

Do you see the violence and
chaos unleashed on black
bodies in the name of a
justice so often denied to
them?

Do you see the organised
looting of opportunities, of
human rights, of dignity and
humanity? Do you see the
millions of scattered
and shattered lives strewn
about the streets of their
city?

Tell me, what do you hear
when you watch Minneapolis
burning?

The cacophony of rioting
streets?

Police sirens and their
promise of order being
restored?

Do you hear the smothered
lament of a grieving people
pleading for hope?

Do you hear the clamour of
millions of dissenting voices
calling for justice?

Do you hear the suffocating
cries of a people dying to be
seen?

Do you hear him call out for
his mum as he breathes his
last?

Do you hear his plea echoed
in that of this nine-year-old
child imploring to his mother:

'Mum, It's not my fault that I
was born black?'

Maybe all you can hear is
your heart-piercing silence.
The one that knows only one
protest:

'It's not my fault.'

'It's not my fault.'

'It's not my fault.'

It's not my fault that you have
to temper your rage, unlearn

to fight, code switch in order
to survive.

It's not my fault that you lie
awake at night, unable to
count the sheep because
your mind is saturated with a
dreadful litany of black lives
that couldn't matter less.

It's not my fault that you
wake up concussed and
consumed
by fear and amnesia, your
memory beaten to dust,
your history whitewashed by
revisionist pedagogies.

It's not my fault that your
children learn to hide from
the police long before they
learn to read.

It's not my fault that they are
not afforded the privilege of
innocence their childhood
should give them.

It's not my fault that their
mothers' only prayer is that
they live not to become the
next trending hashtag.

It's not my fault that when
death comes searching,
you are the easiest to find.

'It's not my fault.'

'It's not my fault.'

'It's not my fault.'

Objection your Honour! Cries
out the blood of the
innocents.

With Abel, they demand
justice, and protest against
your dereliction of duty.

Like mighty waters, they
persist and insist through the
violence, devastation and
death, and proclaim with
open throats: 'I am my
brother's keeper. I am my
sister's keeper.'

No! Now is not the time for
white guilt or white shame.

Now is not the time for white
introspection.

Now is not the time for white
performance.

Now is the time to recognise
that my silence is collusion.

Now is the time to stand up
and speak out.

Now is the time to denounce
and confront the debilitating
forces of white supremacy.

One last thing.

Look beyond the charred
remains of buildings.

Look beyond the shattered
glass, the looting, and the
unrest.

In fact, look beyond the USA.
Look closer. Look deeper,
look at home. What do you
see?

REFLECTION

Q. Having listened to Lusa's poem, and watched people plea to be excused from responsibility for such racist atrocities and violence, what do you see? How do you respond?

CONFESSION ONE

WATCH

Watch the [video](#) from 00:28:48 up to 00:30:06.

In this section, Denis and Chine lead us in our first confession.

INSTRUCTIONS

As Denis leads the confession, join Chine in responding with the words in bold.

Let us examine our ways and test them

And let us return to the Lord.

Let us lift up our hearts and our hands

To God in heaven, and say:

‘We have sinned and rebelled

And you have not forgiven

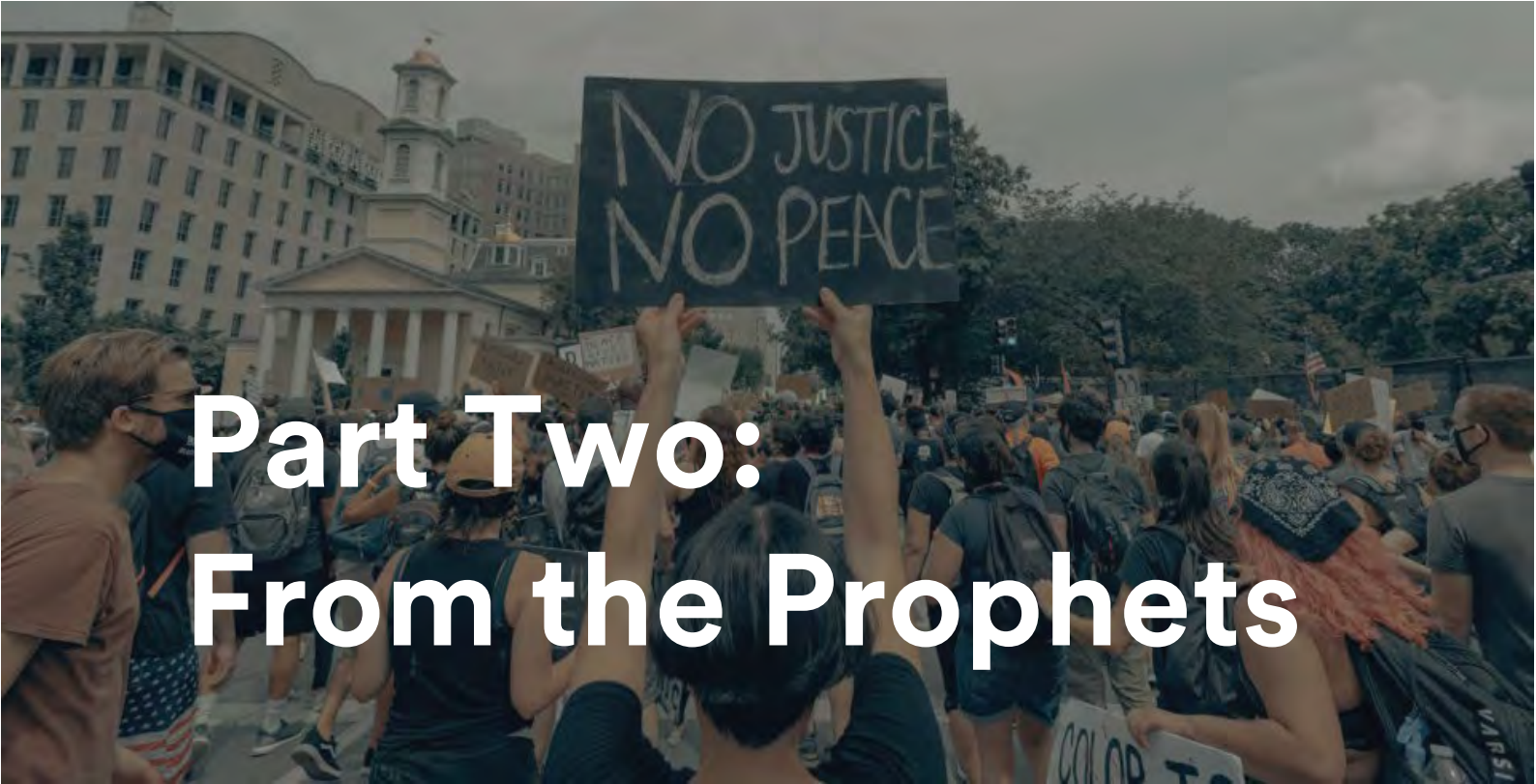
For we are yet to repent.’

REFLECTION

Q. What, if anything, do you feel the Lord calling you to confess?

Q. What lines in the liturgy of lament and confession impact you most? Why?

Q. How might the practice of repentance, if genuinely entered, make for a better conversation?



Part Two: From the Prophets

WATCH

Watch the [video](#) from 00:30:10 up to 01:01:33.

In this section, Denis introduces Chine's prophetic address. Chine explores the church's history with white supremacy.

A transcript of Chine's address can be found at licc.org.uk/reimagining-race.

WATCH

Watch the [video](#) from 01:01:35 up to 01:04:38.

In this section, Dave leads us in silent reflection. You may wish to pause the video at 01:02:48.

REFLECTION

Q. What is the Lord saying to you through Chine's prophetic address?

Attendee answers from the event:

- It's not enough to be 'not racist'; we have to be 'anti-racist' and challenge racism
- My silence is collusion; white supremacy is a sin
- Stop hogging the microphone, and listen. Amplify the voices of those who suffer
- Courage and discomfort are holy callings
- 'I'm no longer accepting the things I can't change. I'm changing the things I cannot accept' – Dr Angela Davis

CONFESSION TWO

WATCH

Watch the [video](#) from 01:04:38 up to 01:05:06.

In this section, Denis and Chine lead us in our second confession.

INSTRUCTIONS

As Denis leads the confession, join Chine in responding with the words in bold.

Let us examine our ways and test them

And let us return to the Lord.

Let us lift up our hearts and our hands

To God in heaven, and say:

‘We have sinned and rebelled

And you have not forgiven

For we are yet to repent.’

REFLECTION

Q. Where have our churches, communities, and nations failed, falling into sin or resisting responsibility for the racism in our midst?



Part Three: Hope

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

WATCH

Watch the [video](#) from 01:06:13 up to 01:08:56.

In this section, Denis and Chine leads us in an affirmation of faith.

INSTRUCTIONS

As Denis leads, join Chine in responding with the words in bold.

Remember our affliction and our wandering, the bitterness and the gall –
Our souls are downcast.

Yet this we call to mind, and therefore we have hope:

Because of the Lord's great love, we are not consumed

For his compassions never fail.

They are new every morning; Great is your faithfulness.

We say to ourselves. 'The Lord is our portion. Therefore we will wait for him.'

The Lord is good to those whose hope is in him,

To the one who seeks him.

It is good to wait quietly

For the salvation of the Lord!

REFLECTION

Q. Where do you see signs of hope in your church, and in your daily life?

THE Q&A

WATCH

Watch the [video](#) from 01:08:57 to 01:36:20.

In this section, the speakers answer many of the questions asked by the attendees.



Dissatisfaction

Vision

First Steps

Resistance to Change

Beckhard-Harris Change Equation, online [here](#).

Questions answered by the speakers:

- Q. What do we mean when we talk about race, racism, and whiteness? (01:17:13)
- Q. What's one thing that's a deep source of dissatisfaction for you right now? (01:21:48)
- Q. What's a crucial resource for understanding identity and race? (01:26:00)
- Q. If your community (and church leadership) are predominately white, how can we make sure we are uplifting and celebrating diversity? (01:30:38)

Other questions asked at the event:

- Q. How do we avoid cultural appropriation?
- Q. How can our churches take steps to being truly multi-cultural when we are already multi-coloured?

REFLECTION

Q. What question would you want to ask the speakers?

WATCH

Watch the [video](#) from 01:36:32 up to 01:39:01.

In this section, Denis and LICC Trustee Board Member Victoria Lawrence lead us in intercession and prayer. Lift your prayers to the Lord too.

REFLECTION

Q. What is your prayer of lament, healing, and hope?

PASSION LED US HERE

Part Four: Commissioning

WATCH

Watch the [video](#) from 01:39:02 up to the end as Denis and Chine send us out.

REFLECTION

Q. What is one thing you will do in response to this talk, as an agent of reconciliation?

CONCLUDING LAMENT

INSTRUCTIONS

As Denis leads the liturgy, join Chine in responding with the words in bold.

Arise and cry out in the night

As the watches of the night begin

Pour out your heart like water

In the presence of the Lord!

Lift up your hands to him

Thus says the Lord,

‘Give careful thought to your ways

Go up into the mountains

And bring down timber and build my house

So that I may take pleasure in it and be
honoured’

From this day on, from this day

Give careful thought to the moment

When the foundation of the Lord’s temple
was laid in you.

Give careful thought

For until now there was no seed in the barn

Until now the vines bore no fruit.

Consecrate yourselves

For only Spirit and Truth

Will give victory in the land.

Consecrate yourselves

Abide with us Lord Jesus

For the night is at hand and the day is past

As the night watch looks for the morning

So do we look to you O Christ

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES FROM THE SPEAKERS

- **BOOK:** *God Is Not a White Man and Other Revelations* by Chine McDonald
- **POEM:** 'Untitled Lament' by Denis Adide
- **VIDEO SERIES:** 'By This They Shall Know' by Denis Adide
- **ARTICLE:** 'We Can't Breathe' by Selina Stone for LICC
- **BOOK:** *Black and British: A Forgotten History* by David Olusoga
- **BOOK:** *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* by James H. Cone
- **BOOK:** *Ghost Ship: Institutional Racism and the Church* by A. D. A. France-Williams
- **BOOK:** *We Need to Talk About Race: Understanding the Black Experience in White Majority Churches* by Ben Lindsay
- **BOOK:** *After Whiteness: An Education in Belonging* by Willie J. Jennings
- **BOOK:** *Be the Bridge: Pursuing God's Heart for Racial Reconciliation* by Latasha Morrison

MORE FROM LICC



WISDOM LAB: JUST LISTENING

Explore racial justice and other justice issues with your church or small group, with the discussion guide for our recorded event [Wisdom Lab: Just Listening](#), prompting a better conversation about discipleship amidst our culture.



THE BE WISE COURSE

Enjoyed this wisdom Lab, but want something more in depth and tailored to your whole life? Led by Dr Dave Benson, [Be Wise](#) is a twelve-session course where you'll grow with others as you make connections between your theology and the way you live your life.

See all of LICC's Wisdom Labs at licc.org.uk/ourresources/wisdom-labs

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