



Welcome to the November 2020 newsletter from Inclusive Church!

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The Inclusive Church Newsletter is a digital publication produced every month. It aims to provide supporters and members with the latest news and information from around the life of Inclusive Church and our partner organisations.

From the National Coordinator

Hello everyone, and welcome to your monthly newsletter.

Brrr. Winter has definitely arrived in Birmingham, and Christmas is on its way (whatever that will look like this year!) The weirdest year any of us have probably ever experienced is coming to an end, and perhaps the pandemic itself will be coming to an end in the near future too, as there have been some promising results in clinical trials for several vaccinations. We're nearly there now. In the words of that old cliché: we can see a light at the end of the tunnel. We are praying for you and for all your loved ones in this final stretch.

Website update

Ben (the website administrator) and I have been working hard on the website over these last few months. We thought we were ready to launch but then had some useful feedback about accessibility from various sources, so we have been working on that ever since. We would love any input from you at this stage - if you have comments about the old website or you have links and resources to share which you think we should consider for the new website, please get in touch: office@inclusive-church.org

Fundraising

The trustees have put together a Fundraising Committee who have been looking at the all-important issue of income for IC's work. We are a small charity, and we do a lot on a shoestring, but we do need to secure more income to keep doing the things we're doing now and more. We will be launching a Fundraising Strategy soon, which will likely include a monthly focus in the newsletter, so please watch out for that.

Trustees board

We are looking for applications to join the trustees board. We would especially welcome applications from people of colour, women and minority genders, and non-Anglicans. We are trying to diversify the board to further reflect the work we do.

Read on for an important update on the Synod elections work from Nic Tall, and for more about a series called 'Shut in. Shut out. Shut up.' which people involved in the annual Conference on Disability and Church (in partnership with St Martin-in-the-Fields) have been involved in.

Thank you for your continued support. Enjoy the newsletter!

Church of England Synod Elections 2021

With the publication of the 'Living in Love and Faith' resources, which you can access [here](#), there has been a surge in interest about General Synod elections. Nic Tall, our elections coordinator, reports on all the developments below.

With the General Synod elections having been rearranged for 2021, we are still organising to ensure a strong inclusive voice in the Church of England's national assembly. Significant debates will take place in the next Synod, not least those following on from the Living in Love and Faith process. We know that conservative groups in the church are working hard for these elections. Inclusive Christians need to take this seriously and ensure they are well represented.

So, what can you do? We need to have people in place to vote and candidates willing to stand, clergy and laity, in every diocese. Voting will be in September 2021, so there is time to prepare.

1) Make sure that all of your Deanery Synod places for your parish church are filled by the end of June, and filled by inclusive Christians who will vote next September. Deanery Synods form the electorate, and every vote counts. These elections are always very close, with just a handful of votes able to change the outcome. If you still have a Deanery Synod vacancy, it can be filled by a vote of the PCC or at your next APCM. If it helps, get someone on Deanery Synod just for a year so they can vote in September, and then they can stand down. But make sure you have all of your voters in place.

2) Consider if you, or someone you know, would be able to stand for General Synod. If we don't have inclusive candidates on the ballot paper they can't be elected, it's as simple as that. We will need candidates, both clergy and lay, in every diocese, and multiple candidates in many cases. Our elections co-ordinator, Nic Tall, is available to talk to anyone about what is involved, and to guide candidates through the process. See below for contact details.

As we've seen with the recent elections in America – voting matters. It's 100% more effective than complaining on social media. With conservative factions throwing everything they can in organising for these elections, it's up to you to ensure the inclusive voice of the church is not lost in the important debates that are coming up. For more information, please contact Nic Tall (synod@inclusive-church.org).

Shut In, Shut Out, Shut Up.

Working with IC partners HeartEdge, IC trustee Fiona MacMillan has devised an online series of honest conversations, centring the voices of disabled & neurodivergent people. It's part of the online festival of theology & ideas, Living God's Future Now.

Six sessions have explored experience & ideas including neurodiversity & intersectionality, disability & social justice, and coronavirus & post-pandemic church. Many of our disability conference planners & speakers have been part of the series, including Rachel Noel, Naomi Lawson Jacobs, Ann Memmott, Krysia Waldock, Bingo Allison, Katie Tupling, Tim Goode, Emily Richardson.

Catch up with the ShutIOU series on the HE FB page [here](#).

Blogs and News

IC news and blogs

Ruth has now edited the subtitles on the 2nd conversation in the Black Theology Series - with Dwight Hopkins. You can listen and read it [here](#).

There are two new blogs on the IC website. The first is by Judith Tatton about her PhD work on sexual ethics and a new emerging type of Christian world-wide. You can read that [here](#). The second is by regional ambassador, Stephen Monk, about Covid, inclusion and the countryside. You can read that one [here](#).

Other news

Raj Barath Patta, liberation theologian and Methodist presbyter, writes about the subversive message of Christ the King on his blog page [here](#).

Inclusive Church Ambassadors

We have a great network of ambassadors covering different parts of England and Wales. They are the representatives of Inclusive Church on the ground. You can find out who the ambassadors are - and where they are - by looking [here](#).

Details of the role description for ambassadors is available [here](#). If you want to be an ambassador for your area, get in touch with the [National Coordinator](#).

New ambassadors

There are two new ambassadors to welcome this month. Nigel Pietroni, who has been delivering the ambassador training on Public Narrative recently, has joined as an ambassador for Birmingham. We also have a new ambassador in Suffolk, Alan Birt. Say hello to these new ambassadors by contacting them [here](#)!

From Hereford Inclusive Church Forum:

****AGM Report and the Publication of Living in Love and Faith****

How often every day do we leap to quick judgements of others, by their clothes, their looks, their age, the newspaper they buy? Almost certainly more often than we realise: we humans have evolved to assess strangers for possible allies or danger in an instant, and someone who looks “different” is often treated with caution.

Of course, we habitually make quick judgements (“heuristics”) too – on whether a person is a friend or a threat – on the basis of the colour of a person’s skin, or on the basis of their sexuality, or their

class, or their churchmanship; here our instinct to avoid what appears different, and seek the company of those we see as being “like ourselves” becomes limiting and damaging. This year has been marked by the Black Lives Matter protests in the US, following tragic deaths of BAME people at the hands of over-reacting police officers, but this is not a problem that is confined to America.

The Revd Shemil Mathew spoke (via Zoom) to the autumn meeting of Hereford Diocese Inclusive Church Forum on 3 November. Shemil was born in India, trained at Cuddesdon, was ordained at Peterborough, and founded the Anglican Minority Ethnic Network (AMEN). He is now based in Derby and holds a variety of posts, including being Anglican Chaplain at Oxford Brookes University and a trainer for Unconscious Bias training.

Shemil’s talk was enlivening and fascinating, and HDICF members were invited to examine ways in which we make the kind of instantaneous assessments mentioned above. He explained that there is “little morality attached to bias” – it’s human nature – but that we should resist the impulse known as the “horns effect” – to judge a person in a negative way because of one perceived negative characteristic. One example given in discussion was the way many of us react to a hoodie. “Slow” thinking brings more rational results.

Shemil himself has made a journey; as a BAME man he has been subject to heuristic judgements, but he recognised that his upbringing led him to hold negative views of LGBT people, and that his years in the UK, when he has met and got to know many gay people, have helped him challenge and reassess his earlier preconceptions. His story and experience seem particularly relevant as we welcome the publication this week of *Living in Love and Faith*, the Church of England’s resources enabling church members to learn more about human identity, relationships, marriage and sexuality. We recognise the difficult challenges its materials will present for many in the church, but we look forward to the progress and greater understanding that engaging fully with the LLF materials will enable over the coming months.

It is likely that the release of LLF will provoke debate in parishes, and next year we look forward to a well-structured diocesan plan to encourage all to engage with the resources.

Events

All of the following events are online due to Covid-19.

Student Christian Movement

On the **21st November**, SCM have an online gathering called 'Our Daily Bread' to launch the new campaign focus - food poverty in the UK. Guests include Niall Cooper, director of Church Action on Poverty. More info [here](#).

Holyrood House

On the Saturday **28th November**, Holyrood House are hosting an on-line Advent retreat - Travels with Mary, Nurturing new life in darkness. To find out more, email enquiries@holyroodhouse.org.uk

Supporting the work of Inclusive Church

If you value the work that IC does and are a member or supporter, maybe you would like to give to our work, either as a one-off donation or on a monthly basis. Why not take a collection in your church for IC?

Inclusive Church exists only because of the generous giving of our members, member churches and supporters. The more money that is given, the more capacity we have to do great things!

You can donate quickly and easily by following [this link](#). Or contact Ruth: office@inclusive-church.org

To ensure that you continue to receive this newsletter, please make sure you let us know if you change your email address.

The content of the newsletter is drawn from a number of sources including individuals and partner organisations. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect a 'formal viewpoint' of the Inclusive Church trustees, individual members of Inclusive Church or registered Inclusive Churches. Contact The National Coordinator at Inclusive Church by phone 07935 374877 or email: office@inclusive-church.org