

Statement from Christians in Leeds

As Christians we believe in God's love for everyone, shown to us in Jesus Christ. Because of this we reject the use of Christian language and imagery in any racist context. We note the march on 25th April in Leeds, and we wish to make it clear that UKIP do not speak for us or for the Christian faith of which we are a part.

Jesus said:

'Love your neighbour as you love yourself' (Matthew 22.39; Mark 12.31; Luke 10.27) and

'Do to others what you would like them to do to you' (Matthew 7.12; Luke 6. 31).

When asked who our neighbour is, Jesus makes it clear that he does not mean the person who is closest to us in ethnicity – in fact, the person he chooses as an example of a neighbour in the parable of the Good Samaritan is a Samaritan – that is, someone who was distrusted and regarded as inferior and impure by most of the society of Jesus' time (Luke 10.29 – 37).

Our calling as Christians is to love and to learn from all God's people: celebrating the beauty and dignity of every human being, with a special bias for anyone whose beauty and dignity is contested through ignorance, pride, prejudice, racism, hatred. We believe that God is on the side of people who are marginalised and oppressed, and that if we turn away from or persecute those people we turn away from God. In our context, we believe this means that we have a God-given duty to stand up for people of all faiths and none who are victims of racism. This is particularly the case when victimisation is being justified using Christian language.

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Please join us resisting UKIP's divisive exclusive politics. For those who can, please join us on the counter protest at 11am at Leeds City Square on 25th April. Whether or not you can, please join us in praying for unity and peace for our Leeds communities, recognising the evils of Islamophobia, anti-Semitism and all racism, and calling out racism in your everyday life whenever you can.

As Freeman of Leeds Nelson Mandela said, 'To be free is to live in a way that respects and enhances the freedom of others' (Long Walk to Freedom). We know that there are many problems facing our city, problems with housing, employment and pay. As Christians committed to the Kingdom of God we are passionate about addressing these problems. But blaming people of different religions or races for those problems makes them harder to solve. We need to be united so that we can make our city everything it should be.

Loving God, make us channels of your peace.

Where there is hatred, let us bring love.

Where there is suspicion, let us bring faith.

Where there is fear, let us bring hope.

Where there is division, let us bring unity.

Amen.

Signatories

PC indicates personal capacity.

Rt Revd Arun Arora - Bishop of Kirkstall

Rt Hon Sir John Battle - former Leeds West MP and Chair of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Leeds Justice and Peace Commission

Rev Jamie Kissack - United Reformed Church Yorkshire Synod Moderator

Bishop Tony Parry - New Testament Church of God

Revd Kerry Tankard - Methodist Church (Chair, Yorkshire West Methodist District)

Deacon Guy Austin-Bride - Methodist Church

Revd Graham Brownlee - Baptist Church (PC)

David Flowers, Leeds Vineyard

Prof Alan Deacon - Chair, Project Bonhoeffer

Sandra Griffiths – Chair, Mill Hill Unitarian Chapel (PC)

Rev Heston Groenewald - Church of England

Dr Simon Hewitt - Roman Catholic (PC)

Rev Natalie Hughes – Baptist Church (PC)

Rev'd Jo Jones - Church of England (PC)

Revd Steven Jones - Methodist Church

Revd Sonia Kasibante - Church of England

Rev Alistair Kaye - Church of England

Rev Josh Lees - Church of England

Rod Levene - Harehills Lane Baptist Church

Revd Jo Lightowler - Methodist Church

Deacon Judith Marshall - Methodist Church and Leeds Sanctuary

Signatories continued

Revd Leoné Martin - Baptist Church (PC)

Rachel Muers - Society of Friends (Quakers)

Canon Paul Maybury - Church of England

Rev Joseph Nelson, Lutheran Church in Great Britain

Revd Timothy Nicholls- Methodist Church

Rev Mo Onyett - Methodist Church

Revd Sally Osborn - Church of England

Rev Dr Nicola Anne Robinson United Reformed Church (PC)

Revd Canon Anne Russell - Team Rector of the Parish of Seacroft

Dr Tasia Scrutton - Roman Catholic Church (PC)

Kathy Shaw - Roman Catholic Diocese of Leeds:
Justice and Peace Commission and SPARK Social Justice (PC)

Fiona Sherburn - Leeds Convenor, Progressive
Christianity Network (PC)

Revd Nigel Wright - Methodist Church

Revd Emily Young - Methodist Church