**\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*PRESS RELEASE\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\*\***

A group of Christian leaders across Chester have come together to stand against racism, bullying and prejudice.

Protests continue to take place across the world in support for the Black Lives Matter movement, following the death of George Floyd.

Crowds of people gathered a few weeks ago outside Chester’s Townhall for a “socially distanced protest”, which was organised by BLM Chester.

Now, this group of Christian leaders , including the Bishop of Birkenhead and the Pastor of the Redeemed Christian Church of God congregation Calvary Love City Chester  plus leaders from a wide cross section of other Christian denominations have released a statement asking God to “bring an end to racial injustice”.

As Christian leaders in Chester we know that silence is no longer an option: Black Lives Matter.

Following the recent murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis we make it clear that we are appalled by the violence committed against a human being created in the image of God. Racial justice is not just a black or white issue; it is a Kingdom of God issue. Jesus came to destroy every dividing wall of hostility to make one new humanity in Christ.

The Christian scriptures contain a vision of the justice that Christ established through his life, death and resurrection: He has brought down the powerful from their thrones, and lifted up the lowly; he has filled the hungry with good things, and sent the rich away empty. In contrast to this, we recognise that racism is embedded in many institutions and cultures – including our own. For this we are truly sorry.

We recognise that we have allowed ourselves to become estranged from God’s heart and we have at times disregarded the people He loves including those from the Black, Asian and other ethnic minorities in our own churches and communities.

We recognise we need to listen to and learn from our Black, Asian and other ethnic minorities sisters and brothers. We need to reflect, repent and act differently across our city to forge together a better future where all have a voice, are able to contribute and live free from fear and oppression.

We wish to build relationships in our city so we value others, irrespective of differences, addressing problems together and finding common cause with partners and friends to forge a better future together.

We hope that through our listening we can shape the policies, practices and priorities of the institutions, churches, businesses and services of our city.

May God transform our hearts, renew our minds and lead us forwards in humility and love."

This letter is supported by:

Revd Andy & Sue Glover               HBC Chester

Ed Green                                             HBC Chester

Revd Phil Jump                                  Regional Minister North Western Baptist Association

Pastor Basil & Bisi Onyeoji            RCCG Calvary Love City Chester

Rt Revd Keith Sinclair                      Bishop of Birkenhead

The Ven Dr Michael Gilbertson   Archdeacon of Chester

Very Revd Dr Tim Stratford          Dean of Chester Cathedral

Revd Jane Brooke                            Vice Dean Chester Cathedral

Revd Jeremey Dussek                    Chester Cathedral

Revd Sarah Fenby                            Chester Cathedral

Revd Hennie Johnston                   St. Mark’s

Revd Anina Thomas                        St. Mark’s

Revd Pete Rugen                              St Michael's, Plas Newton

Revd Tina Upton                               Holy Trinity Blacon

Revd Louise Annison                       Holy Trinity Blacon

Revd Chris Blunt                               St. Paul's and St. Luke's

Revd R. P. Whaite                            St Mary without-the-walls, Chester

Revd Jonathan Philips                     St Peters at the Cross

Revd Graham Shaw                         Christchurch

Revd David Chesters                       St John’s

Revd John Kirkland                          All Saints Hoole

Sam Durdant-Hollamby                 The Groves Church

Revd Geoff Thompson                   Kingsway Chapel

Pastor Robin Gerrard                      Waverton Evangelical Fellowship

John & Anna Simmons                   Senior Leaders Vineyard 53

Keith & Rachel Cooper                   Freedom Church Chester

Mark Foster                                     Audacious Church Chester

Richard & Wendy Price                 Netchurch

Pastor Tim Rowlands                      Festival Church

Robin and Claire Dillamore           Burn 24/7 Chester

Revd Jonathan Hodgins                 City Road Presbyterian Church

Revd Mo Roberts                            City Road Presbyterian Church

Gerald and Lin Sidery Northgate Church

Revd Neil Stacey                               Superintendent Minister, North Cheshire Methodist Circuit

Revd Dr Christine Dutton              Wesley Methodist Church

Revd David Goodwin                      Minister, North Cheshire Methodist Circuit

Revd Pat Billsborrow                       Methodist Ecumenical Officer (Chester and Stoke District)

Revd Dr Christine Jones                Methodist Ecumenical Officer (Liverpool District)

Revd Glyn Jones                                Light College and Collective

Gareth Thomas                                 Light College and Collective

Revd Jacky Embrey                          Moderator, URC Mersey Synod

Revd Ruth Wilson                             Upton and Vicars Cross United Reformed Churches

Revd Chris Davies                             Blacon United Reformed Church

Revd Andrew Taylor                        County Ecumenical Development Officer, Churches Together in Cheshire

Revd Ken Walker                              Chair, Churches Together in Chester City Centre

Major Gareth Dickens                    Ecumenical Officer for Cheshire, The Salvation Army

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