

CHURCHES STAND WITH GRIEVING COMMUNITY FOLLOWING THE SHOOTING OF CHRIS KABA IN SOUTH LONDON ON 5 SEPTEMBER 2022

The Racial Justice Advocacy Forum, which draws its membership from Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, Baptists Together, Methodists, the United Reformed Church, Quakers, Sam Sharpe Project, Churches Together in England, the Ascension Trust, The Evangelical Alliance, The National Church Leaders Forum, Movement for Justice and Reconciliation, Christian Aid and the Salvation Army, has issued the following statement following the shooting of Chris Kaba in South London on 5th September 2022:

Churches and faith-based organisations have appealed for compassion and justice for a wounded community in the wake of the Metropolitan Police-related shooting of Chris Kaba in Kirkstall Gardens, Streatham Hill, south London on 5 September 2022.

Since that date members of the Racial Justice Advocacy Forum, the National Church Leaders Forum, the Evangelical Alliance, the Ascension Trust and the London Baptist Association have been meeting to hear the concerns of the bereaved family and the wider community, offering pastoral support in their grief, and solidarity in their search for answers. Chris, who was a well-known musician, was soon to become a father for the first time, which only adds to the tragedy.

What we know so far

Mr Kaba, who was 24, died as a result of a firearms incident involving the police at about 22:00 BST. The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC), who will be investigating the shooting, said that no "non-police issue firearm" had been found following a detailed search of the car and surrounding area. As a result, Mr Kaba's family have raised the concern that the killing was the result of racial bias rather than actual threat.

In response to the shooting Commander Alexis Boon, from the Met Police, said: "I understand that this incident is extremely concerning and I would like to reassure the community that the Met is co-operating fully with the IOPC (Independent Office for Police Conduct) as they carry out a thorough and independent investigation." A week after Mr Kaba's death, which is now being treated as a homicide by the IOPC, the Met Assistant Commissioner Amanda Pearson said: "Following the death of Chris Kaba, the firearms officer involved has been suspended from duty."

Our commitment as churches

New Park Road (NPR) Baptist Church, which is located near to where the incident took place, has become a focal point for reflection, and its pastor, Revd Siaa-Liane Mathurin, and church worker, Rachel Swaby, have been liaising with community members, especially young people, who are both concerned and angry about the circumstances of the young man's demise. Revd Siaa-Liane made her church available to local residents on 8 September 2022 for reflection, prayer and pastoral support. On 12 September, a NPR-led vigil which involved Mr Kaba's family, said prayers, laid flowers and kept a minute's silence at the site where the young man was slain.

The RJAF is calling for prayers for the Kaba family, for Chris' friends and the wider community. They are remembering in particular the many young people who are hurting and fearful, and the parents who are concerned for their welfare at this time.

They are also appealing to the IOPC for a timely investigation in order to help restore confidence and reduce the rising tensions in the area. The Ascension Trust, which runs the Street Pastors and School Pastors initiatives, will be working with local churches to offer further pastoral assistance and advice to residents who are anxious about what has taken place. The RJAF is keen to point out that churches and parachurch groups have experience in working as conduits in communities that have been alienated from the police, and to offer support to those who are seeking to develop a dialogue around these concerns.

On 29 September 2022 from 7.30pm, the RJAF will be hosting a webinar that aims to better equip churches and communities to respond to critical incidents, and to engage with the police. For more information, see below.

Ends.

For more information

Richard Reddie
Director of Justice and Inclusion
Churches Together in Britain and Ireland
Email: Richard.Reddie@ctbi.org.uk

Revd. Wale Hudson-Roberts
Justice Enabler
Baptist Union of Great Britain
Email: whudson-roberts@baptist.org.uk