

ARTIST BRIEF

Inclusive Biblical Illustrations Project

*Commissioned by Bristol Cathedral
In partnership with the Diocese of Bristol*

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INTRODUCTION

Rooted in the inclusive vision of God's Kingdom, where people from "every nation, tribe, people and language" gather before God (Revelation 7:9), Bristol Cathedral and the Diocese of Bristol are committed to building communities in which every person is seen, valued and able to flourish.

As part of this commitment, Bristol Cathedral is embarking on an ambitious new creative project: the development of a library of inclusive biblical illustrations for use in Collective Worship and educational settings across primary schools.

Every week, children encounter biblical stories through assemblies, acts of worship and classroom learning. In these settings, visual imagery plays an important role in capturing attention, supporting understanding, sparking imagination and deepening engagement. Yet many of the image resources currently available to schools originate from a limited range of cultural perspectives and often present a narrow picture of the people and communities found within Scripture. As a result, they do not adequately reflect either the diversity of the biblical world or the diversity of the children encountering these stories today.

This project seeks to respond to that gap. The vision is to create a collection of high-quality illustrations through which children from all backgrounds can recognise themselves, and others both like and unlike themselves, within the story of God's people. The aim is not simply to make biblical imagery more diverse, but to create visual storytelling that is faithful to Scripture, historically and culturally informed, artistically excellent and deeply engaging for children.

At its heart, the project is shaped by the Christian belief that all people are created in the image of God. It is informed by theological reflection on inclusion and the Imago Dei, research into representation in children's literature, and consultation with children from three contrasting schools across the Diocese of Bristol.

This commission presents an exciting opportunity for artists to contribute to a resource that will be used by schools, churches and communities for years to come. Through this work, Bristol Cathedral hopes to enable children to encounter biblical stories afresh, deepen their understanding of Scripture, and discover that God's story is a story in which all people can find a place.

PROJECT AIMS

The Inclusive Biblical Illustrations Project aims to:

- Create a high-quality library of biblical illustrations for Collective Worship and primary education.
- Support schools and churches with engaging visual resources that are faithful to Scripture and sensitive to historical and cultural context.
- Help children recognise themselves and others within the story of God's people.
- Celebrate the diversity already present within Scripture and global church.
- Develop a freely available resource for schools, churches, charities and educators.

ABOUT BRISTOL CATHEDRAL

Bristol Cathedral is a place of worship, learning, creativity and community at the heart of the city. Through education, the arts and public engagement, it seeks to explore questions of faith, identity, justice and belonging. This project forms part of the Cathedral's ongoing commitment to racial justice and to creating opportunities for children and young people to engage with biblical stories in fresh and meaningful ways.

ABOUT THE DIOCESE OF BRISTOL

The Diocese of Bristol supports parishes, chaplaincies and church schools across the region, helping people of all ages engage with Christian faith and values. Through its Racial Justice Strategy, the Diocese is committed to promoting inclusion, representation and belonging, particularly through its work with schools and young people. This project contributes to that vision by creating resources that reflect the diversity of God's people and the communities we serve.

SCOPE OF THE PROJECT

The Diocese of Bristol and Bristol Cathedral wish to develop a new library of inclusive digital illustrations for use in Collective Worship, primarily with Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 pupils (ages 5-11).

The illustrations will accompany the telling of biblical stories and will be designed for projection onto large screens during whole-school gatherings.

The wider project has the potential to encompass a substantial library of biblical stories. It will begin with a pilot phase of nine stories, enabling the illustrations to be tested in schools and helping to inform the development of the wider resource.

Artists will be selected who can demonstrate a strong understanding of the aims of the project and the ability to produce high-quality artwork suitable for this context. Bristol-based artists, as well as artists from Global Majority and minority ethnic backgrounds, are particularly encouraged to apply.

For the pilot phase, each story will be represented through a sequence of approximately ten illustrations. These should combine realism with thoughtful stylisation, communicate narrative clearly, and offer rich and inclusive visual representation.

Inclusive Representation

For the pilot phase, inclusion should be rooted in the biblical text and its historical and cultural context wherever this is significant. The intention is not to introduce diversity artificially into biblical stories, but to recognise and communicate the diversity that is already present within Scripture.

This approach seeks to avoid both historical inaccuracy and tokenistic representation, while encouraging children to engage with biblical stories in ways that are authentic, meaningful and accessible.

As the project develops beyond the pilot phase, there may be opportunities to explore how biblical stories can also be represented through different cultural lenses and artistic traditions, reflecting the Christian belief that all people are created in the image of God and that Christ is present among all peoples and cultures.

PROJECT PHASES

PHASE 1

Artist Selection

Artists will initially be invited to submit two images based on a selected biblical story. These submissions will be considered by a panel involving artists, educators and Diocesan staff, with artists then invited to proceed through the selection process.

PHASE 2

Pilot

A selected group of artists will produce illustrations for nine biblical stories. The completed images will be used in selected Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 schools and evaluated independently.

PHASE 3

Wider Project

Subject to the outcome of the pilot and the availability of further funding, the Diocese intends to develop the wider visual library (illustrations for approximately 70 biblical stories most commonly used in collective worship). Additional artists from the approved panel may be invited to contribute, allowing the project to develop a broad range of artistic styles, perspectives and cultural approaches.

THEMES AND VISION

Faithfulness, Context and Inclusion

The pilot stories have been selected because they provide opportunities to explore forms of diversity that are already present within Scripture. They include characters and communities whose ethnicity, nationality, gender, social position, disability or experience of marginalisation is significant to the story itself.

Pilot stories include:

- Hagar
- Ruth and Naomi
- The Queen of Sheba
- Miriam and the Women of the Exodus
- The Nativity
- Jesus and the Samaritan Woman
- Bartimaeus
- The Ethiopian Royal Official
- Pentecost

Artists should engage carefully with the historical and cultural context of each story. Supporting materials will provide further information about the rationale for the pilot story selection and should be consulted alongside this brief.

Where historical context is important, illustrations should aim for authenticity and credibility. For example, the Holy Family should be represented within their first-century Middle Eastern context as a Jewish family of modest means (i.e. poor, not rich), rather than through later European artistic conventions.

At the same time, the project recognises the rich Christian tradition of representing biblical stories within different cultural contexts. While the pilot phase focuses on diversity rooted in Scripture and history, the wider project may explore how biblical stories are understood and represented across cultures throughout the world.

GUIDANCE FROM CHILDREN'S CONSULTATION

Consultation with children from three schools across the Diocese identified a number of consistent preferences that should help shape the visual approach to the project.

Diversity Within Images	Children preferred seeing people from different racial and cultural backgrounds together, rather than simply replacing one group with another.
Diversity Within Communities	Representation should recognise diversity within communities as well as between them. Consider variation in: • Skin tone • Age • Hairstyle • Clothing • Physical appearance Cultural identity should be communicated through setting, architecture, clothing, textiles and meaningful visual details, rather than through skin colour alone.
Inclusion Beyond Race	Artists are encouraged to consider wider forms of inclusion, including age, disability and gender, where appropriate to the story and its context.
Visible Faces and Emotions	Children particularly valued being able to see characters' faces and understand how they were feeling. Emotion and expression should support the storytelling.
Realistic, but not Overly Realistic	Children preferred illustrations that combined realism with thoughtful stylisation. Highly cartoon-like imagery was generally less well received.
Colour, Detail and Meaningful Settings	Colourful, detailed illustrations were strongly preferred. Natural and meaningful environments are encouraged, with visual details that help bring the story to life.
Avoiding Stereotypes	The aim is to create thoughtful and nuanced representations that reflect the complexity and diversity of real people and communities.
Artistic Style	Artists are encouraged to bring their own visual language and perspective to the project while maintaining consistency across an individual sequence of illustrations.

TECHNICAL REQUIREMENTS

Formatting

The illustrations will be projected onto large screens and must therefore be supplied as high-resolution digital files suitable for use in schools and churches.

File format: JPEG or PNG

Orientation: Landscape

Aspect ratio: 16:9 widescreen

Minimum resolution: 3840 × 2160 pixels

All illustrations must be original works created by the artist.

Illustrations within an individual story should demonstrate sufficient visual consistency to function as a coherent sequence.

Artist Support

Commissioned artists will receive:

- Story texts and supporting notes
 - Historical and cultural guidance
 - Theological background materials
 - Findings from the children's consultation
 - Opportunities for feedback throughout the pilot phase
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Copyright and Originality

Any use of AI-assisted image generation or other generative tools must be declared as part of the application process.

Copyright in commissioned illustrations will transfer to the Diocese of Bristol in accordance with the commissioning agreement.

The completed illustration library will form a freely available resource for schools, churches, charities and educators. Artists may continue to display commissioned work within portfolios, websites and promotional materials, subject to the terms of the final agreement.

Fees

£700 (incl. VAT) per story for 10 illustrations.

Artists may submit fewer illustrations per story, but no fewer than 8.

The fee will be reduced by £70 for each illustration below 10.

SELECTION CRITERIA

Applications and submitted artwork will be considered against the following criteria:

- Quality, creativity and clarity of the submitted artwork.
- Suitability of the artistic approach for primary-aged children and Collective Worship.
- Understanding of the aims and vision of the Inclusive Biblical Illustrations Project.
- Sensitivity to biblical text and historical and cultural context.
- Ability to communicate narrative, character and emotion through visual storytelling.
- Understanding of inclusive representation and the principles outlined in this brief.
- Ability to develop and maintain a consistent visual approach across a sequence of illustrations.
- Relevant experience and/or demonstrated artistic capability.
- Ability to meet project deadlines and technical requirements.

Applications will be reviewed by a panel that may include representatives from Bristol Cathedral, the Diocese of Bristol, educators, artists and other relevant contributors.

APPLICATION PROCESS

STAGE 1

Artists should submit an expression of interest using [this form](#)

Expression of Interest

Deadline: 1 November 2026

STAGE 2

Initial Artwork Submission

Artists will be invited to submit two illustrations based on the selected biblical story:

- One illustration depicting a key scene from the story.
- One illustration depicting infant Jesus and the Holy Family.

These illustrations should demonstrate the artist's approach to character, narrative, context and visual storytelling.

Submission deadline: **7 December 2026**

STAGE 3

Selection Process

Submissions will be reviewed by a panel comprising representatives from Bristol Cathedral, the Diocese of Bristol, educators, artists and other relevant contributors.

Shortlisted artists may be invited to take part in a conversation or interview as part of the final selection process.

Successful applicants notified by 21 January 2027

STAGE 4

Pilot Phase

Selected artists will be commissioned to produce illustrations for the pilot phase of the project.

Deadline: 1 May 2027

STAGE 5

Wider Project

Subject to successful evaluation and the availability of funding, Bristol Cathedral intends to develop a larger library of biblical illustrations. Additional artists from the approved panel may be invited to contribute to future phases of the project.

APPENDICES

The following supporting documents form part of the wider project documentation and are available on request:

APPENDIX 1 Project Proposal	Background to the project and the identified need, including relevant research and reference material.
APPENDIX 2 Children's Responses to Diverse Nativity Imagery (Data)	Summary of consultation with primary-aged children across three schools in the Diocese of Bristol.
APPENDIX 3 Children's Responses to Diverse Nativity Imagery (Analysis)	Findings from the consultation with primary-aged children across three schools in the Diocese of Bristol, together with design recommendations.
APPENDIX 4 Pilot Stories: Selection and Rationale	The biblical stories selected for the pilot, together with the rationale for their inclusion and guidance on their theological, historical and representational significance.