



Clive Lawrence

To coincide with 'Racial Justice Sunday' today (February 11) the Archbishop of York, The Most Rev. and Rt Hon Stephen Cottrell, visited Lancashire to commission the members of the new Racial Justice Group for The Church of England in Lancashire ([\*\*Blackburn Diocese\*\*](#)).

He did so alongside Rt Revd Philip North, Bishop of Blackburn.

The commissioning event took place in the early afternoon at St Peter's Church in Burnley following a special morning service for Racial Justice Sunday at St Peter's which was attended by civic and community dignitaries from across the town. They included the Burnley Mayor, Councillor Raja Arif Khan; Leader of Burnley Council, Cllr Afrasiab Anwar and many members of the 'Building Bridges in Burnley' team.

Archbishop Stephen also features in a brand new video from the Diocese, released today on [\*\*YouTube\*\*](#) to coincide with the commissioning, and looking at the importance of racial justice for our Diocese now and in the future.

The video features many contributions, including several from key figures in the Diocesan Board of Education. They include some headteachers from our many church schools across the County; with all speaking of the importance of keeping racial justice front and centre in our work.

In the video, Archbishop Stephen says: "It's really good to be back in Lancashire and alongside Bishop Philip to commission the Racial Justice Group for the diocese and to celebrate Racial Justice Sunday in this way.

"I want to be part of a church which includes every tribe, every language, every nation. Racial justice really, really matters because it's part of the call of the gospel, the heart cry of God."

The Archbishop added: "May we all reflect on the importance of racial justice, give thanks for the gifts and beauty of human diversity and commit to do what we can to help end racism and acts of discrimination."

Our Bishop's Adviser on UKME and Global Majority Heritage Matters, Rev. Canon Sarah Gill, added: "We are really committed to this work and are having really positive conversations across the Diocese, especially since our Racial Justice Policy was approved by our Diocesan Synod; this led to the founding of the Racial Justice Group.

"We are grateful and excited to welcome Archbishop Stephen for Racial Justice Sunday to commission the group as begin our work in earnest - from networking to training events and much more."

Rev. Sarah, who is also Vicar of St Stephen's with St James' in Blackburn, added: "Racial justice is fundamental to our work because when we exercise racial justice we recognise every human being is important in God's eyes."

Chair of the Racial Justice Group, The Venerable David Picken, Archdeacon of Lancaster, said: "We still have a long way to go but the Group will

now lead our diocese in tackling the issues that underpin the importance of racial justice.”

And Bishop Philip commented: "The very heart of the gospel we proclaim is God in Jesus coming to take on human form. That tells us something very important about the beauty and preciousness and dignity of every human life, made in the image of God. That's why racial justice should matter so much to the Church and to us as a Diocese.

“I'm really delighted the Archbishop was able to join us to commission our Racial Justice Group. I commend the work they are doing to our parishes and our schools as we seek to address racism and grow really healthy churches that can transform the communities in which they are set.”

### **Blackburn Diocese Racial Justice Group Members**

- Ven. David Picken, Archdeacon of Lancaster and Chair of the Diocesan Racial Justice Group
- Rev. Dr Sarah Siddique Gill, Advisor to the Bishop of Blackburn for UKME/GMH Matters and Vicar of St Stephen’s with St James’ in Blackburn
- Rev. Sam Cheesman, Chaplain to the Bishop of Blackburn
- Mrs Emma Marquis, Headteacher of The Parish of St Laurence CE Primary School in Chorley
- Ms. Rana Shihadah, RE teacher at Cardinal Newman College in Preston and Authorised Lay Minister at St James Church, Brindle
- Judge Araba Obodai, District Judge Obodai Manchester Civil Justice Centre
- Mrs Tio Duffield, Authorised Lay Minister at Lancaster Priory
- Ms Kaarina Leong, Ordinand, currently serving at Lancaster Priory
- Rev. Dr Augustine Omavuebe, Licensed Priest, Diocese of Blackburn and Officiating Minister, St Stephen’s Church, Preston;

Founder/Coordinator of The Nigerian Fellowship, Preston

- Mrs Jade Hackett, Vice Chair of the Governing Board of Coppull Parish Church School
- Mrs Sue Grime, PA to the Bishop’s UKME Advisor and Administrative Support for the Racial Justice Group

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