Archbishop Stephen Cottrell has become a patron for the new organisation Gypsy Roma and Traveller Friendly Churches.

Archbishop Stephen said “I’m delighted to be continuing my encouragement for churches to offer support for Gypsies, Travellers and Roma. I introduced the 2019 General Synod debate ‘Centuries of Marginalisation and Visions of Hope’ calling for the Church to act positively in support of Gypsies Travellers and Roma and speak out against the racism directed against them. I’m excited to see the developing work of Gypsy Roma Traveller Friendly Churches. My prayer is that every Church becomes a place where people from these culturally rich and godly communities are welcomed.”

Following the 2019 General Synod debate the Church of England voted to support the appointment of Chaplains to Gypsies, Roma and Travellers in every diocese, for Church leaders to speak out against racism against these communities and to encourage that land be made available for new Gypsy and Traveller sites. So far 12 dioceses have Chaplains and more dioceses are looking to appoint them.

Chaplain for Durham Diocese and chair of Gypsy Roma Traveller Friendly Churches, the Revd Nicky Chater said, “I love being a Chaplain to Travellers because of the wonderful faith filled people I keep meeting. I’m also shocked by the systematic and deeply ingrained racism there is towards Gypsies, Roma and Travellers, and I feel it’s vital that the Church challenges this injustice.”

Gypsy Roma and Traveller Friendly Churches aims to encourage churches to be the bridge between these communities and the wider population.

Said Ivy Manning, co-ordinator of Gypsy Roma Traveller Friendly Churches and Romany Gypsy, “Churches are well placed to break down the barriers between communities as so many Gypsies, Roma and Travellers are Christian and have a deep respect for the Church.”

More information on Gypsy Roma Traveller Friendly Churches can be found at https://sanctuaryplaces.co.uk/