



THE ARCHBISHOP
OF YORK

People have come together today in Doncaster to celebrate the Pakistani Christian community and to shine a light on the perspectives of people living as a minority.

Following a lunch gathering, the Rt Rev Dr Pete Wilcox, Bishop of Sheffield, opened the event and led opening prayers before handing over to the Archdeacon of Doncaster, the Venerable Javaid Iqbal. The opening worship featured a Punjabi Psalm before speeches were made by the following individuals:

Growing Up as a Christian in Pakistan. Speaker: Shumaya Stephen

Growing Up as a Pakistani in England. Speaker: Joshua Basil

Pakistani Christian Educational Perspective. Speaker: Esther Das, Higher Education Teacher

Pakistani Christian Business Perspective. Speaker: Arthur Victor Samson, Pakistani Businessman in the UK

Living in Pakistan as a Minority Community Member: A Social Challenge. Speaker: Cecil Chaudhry, Pakistani Christian working for Christian Solidarity Worldwide (speech read by Revd Sarah Gill, Associate Archdeacon in the Diocese of Blackburn and Vicar of St Stephen's and St James in Blackburn).

Fleeing Persecution and Resettlement Challenges. Speaker: Asif Mall, Founder of Mordechai Ministries

Pakistani Christian Political Perspective. Speaker: Noshaba Khiljee, Doctor and Politician

Constitutional and Legislative Challenges. Speaker: Cllr. Morris John, Coordinator All Parties Parliamentarian Group for Pakistani Minorities

Challenges and Opportunities – Pakistani Clergy in the Church of England. Speaker: Rev. Isaac Lawrence, Vicar in the Diocese of Carlisle

Addresses were then delivered by the Rt Revd Philip Mounstephen, Bishop of Winchester (Church of England Lead Bishop for the Persecuted Church) and Archbishop Stephen Cottrell, Archbishop of York.

Following a time for questions and discussions a closing prayer was given by the Rt Revd Sophie Jelley, Bishop of Doncaster along with a final blessing by Archbishop Stephen.

Speaking after the event, Archbishop Stephen said:

“I was delighted to attend this celebration of the Pakistani Christian community in Doncaster and humbled to hear the powerful testimonies of those who gathered. It was also a joy to share fellowship with some of my fellow bishops alongside the congregation at St James's.

“It’s essential that as Christians we listen to one another and recognise the significant challenges faced by members of the Pakistani community. There is a lot more that we need to do to address these challenges, but I am confident we can move forward together in a loving and positive way.

“I am grateful to everyone who took part in today’s event and would like to express my gratitude to all of the speakers who shared their lived experiences. I pray we will all learn from these testimonies and do all we can to affirm them.”

Archdeacon Javaid said:

“The Pakistani Christian community is a minority within minorities. It remains an invisible community both in Pakistan and UK. We are so grateful to the Archbishop of York for visiting us today. Today’s event has highlighted the contribution of Pakistani Christian community to the wider society and the challenges they face as a minority in UK and Pakistan. I look forward to further developing these relationships with the Church of England for increased support for Pakistani Christians. This event could not have been possible without the support of Bishop of Sheffield, Bishop of Doncaster and Bishop of Winchester and of course St James Church and the Don Urdu Congregation. May God continue to build and bind us together.”

You can watch a short video of the gathering here







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