



EVERYDAY PEOPLE

— GOD'S GIFT TO THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND —



MINORITY ETHNIC VOCATIONS



FOREWORD

DR JOHN SENTAMU

ARCHBISHOP OF YORK



THERE HAS NEVER BEEN A BETTER TIME FOR CHRISTIANS FROM ETHNIC MINORITIES TO RESPOND TO GOD'S CALL TO MINISTRY IN THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND. THOSE WHO HAVE TOLD THEIR STORIES HERE WILL BE A GREAT ENCOURAGEMENT TO A NEW GENERATION OF YOUNG MINORITY ETHNIC CHRISTIANS IN

THIS COUNTRY – YOU TOO CAN SHAPE THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH AND ITS MISSION.

We have come a long way in recent years, but there is much further to go. We need people who are equipped for cross cultural evangelism and ministry in our increasingly diverse society. This will involve being intentional about encouraging more people from minority ethnic backgrounds to explore their vocation – hence this booklet. Furthermore, as a Church we need to be geared up to identify and develop the leadership potential of minority ethnic clergy. We need minority ethnic clergy as deacons, priests, and bishops. We need ethnic diversity at all levels in the church's ministry. To do this we need an increase in ordinands

from a range of ethnic backgrounds, and we need this now. To be effective in ministry today the Church needs an ethnically diverse ministry. I am excited to think that many of you who read this booklet will be among those who will make this happen!

The ethnic diversity of the Church and its ministry is a gospel imperative. The infant Jesus is hailed by Simeon as a '*Light to the nations*' (LUKE 2.32). St Paul makes clear that in Christ there is no distinction on grounds of ethnicity, gender, or class. (GALATIANS 3.28) Our expectation for the future includes the gathering of '*every nation and tribe, people and language*' before the throne of the Lamb of God, singing their praise in a loud voice together. (REVELATION 7.9) If this is our hope, then we shall need some practice! Praying with Jesus for God's will '*on earth as in heaven*' we seek to make our future hope a present reality.

My thanks to those who have told their stories here of God's call on their lives, and of our call in Christ to make him known. It is my prayer that many readers, especially those from minority ethnic backgrounds, will hear that same call for themselves, and seek to follow Jesus and share in the mission of God in this land. Alleluia!

INTRODUCTION

DR ELIZABETH HENRY

NATIONAL ADVISER MINORITY ETHNIC ANGLICAN CONCERNS



IN ORDER FOR THE CHURCH TO TRULY CHARACTERISE THE BODY OF CHRIST AND THEREFORE FULFIL THE MISSION, IT MUST BE BOTH MORE INCLUSIVE AND REPRESENTATIVE OF ALL IT'S CONSTITUENTS. THERE ARE SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS OF MINORITY ETHNIC CHRISTIANS

IN ANGLICAN CHURCHES YET MINORITY ETHNIC CLERGY MAKE UP LESS THAN 3% OF SERVING CLERGY. THIS IS A CAUSE FOR CONCERN IN OUR CHURCH, NOT BECAUSE THIS IS ABOUT REDRESSING AN IMBALANCE BUT BECAUSE IT IS A GOSPEL IMPERATIVE (GALATIANS 3:28)

We know there are a number of reasons for this under representation of minority ethnic clergy, not least of which is; in the absence of role models it is difficult for people to see a place for themselves.

The Vocations Strategy Group (a working group of the Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns, and

Ministry Division) is working to promote Minority Ethnic Anglican vocations to ordained ministry.

We are often asked:

What sort of people are called to serve through ordained ministry?

There is no 'sort' or 'type', the church needs and seeks diverse people.

How are people called?

In all sorts of ways:

Many say they are called through prayer and counsel. Participants attending our Minority Ethnic Vocations Conferences share that they gain confidence to hear or respond to the call through the affirmation of friends, family or parish priests, and, that this encouragement is essential to their journey.

Some may be inspired through learning about how others have discerned and answered the call. The contributors to this publication share their personal journey to service in the hope that it will be of help to you along the way.



FRANKLIN LEE

CURATE

'The One who calls you is faithful'


I WAS BORN IN HONG KONG AND BROUGHT UP IN SINGAPORE. I WAS EDUCATED IN AN ANGLICAN SCHOOL AND I REMEMBER HOW MUCH I HATED GOING TO CHAPEL EVERY MORNING. I FELT THAT THE CHURCH AND THE BIBLE MEANT NOTHING BUT CEREMONIES AND TRADITIONS. FOR ME CHRISTIANITY WAS SOMETHING OF THE PAST WHICH WAS NO USE TO PEOPLE NOW.

I came to faith when I moved to a Lutheran secondary school. I was moved by the teachers, many of whom were Lutherans. I was much amazed with the teaching and the Christian witness of the teachers in the school. I decided to give the church a try. By now, I was also interested in Reformation history because I was curious as to why people could kill or die for their faith. I started to read a translated and simplified version of Martin Luther's writings. I became a regular member of the fellowship society in school and a regular Sunday church-goer. Those years in both the Lutheran church and school continue to play a significant role in my spiritual discipline and theology.

In 1999, I went to college in Boston, Lincolnshire. Since I was not able to find a Lutheran church, I decided to give the local Anglican parish church a try. Interestingly, having come from the evangelical tradition of Lutheranism, I quite enjoyed the High Mass and the liturgy found in the said parish church. This was the first time I gave Anglicanism a proper thought. In 2001, I moved to York to study History at the University and my main interest was Church History.

Having moved back to Boston after graduation at York, I gradually felt the passion in me to serve God and His Church, so I went to see the parish priest who suggested me leading Morning Prayer and being a Server. Later I spent a few months studying at Wilson Carlile College of Evangelism where I learned a lot about fresh expressions of church and the work of the Church Army. I enjoy more traditional services but I am open to fresh expressions which may help to bring the Gospel to people where they are. I give thanks to God that he has given me the chance





to experience different styles of worship and also meeting wonderful Christians of different traditions.

In 2007, I was recommended by my parish to the Diocesan interview panel for training for ordained ministry. The result was not what I wanted because the panel felt that I was not ready and they could not recommend me to the Bishop. I was greatly disappointed at the time, and so were many of those who prayed and supported me. For a short while, I actually felt ashamed especially when so many people had believed in me. I was angry with God, asking Him why He had put me through this painful experience of shame. After a few weeks of prayer and reflection, though, I felt God's presence and comfort. I also received much support from friends in the UK and from Hong Kong. I learned to respect the discernment of the whole church. I believed that I was called by God, but I also respected the decision made by the wider Church (represented by the panel) which was also there trying to help me and others as we discern our vocation and ministry. This is a corporate act and decision.

In 2008 I was recommended for training and I went to Westcott House Theological College the following year. The greatest gift Westcott House has is its diversity of people, coming from different Church traditions, cultural backgrounds, personalities, professions, and so on. My

training experience was both exciting and challenging and I thoroughly enjoyed my time at college. I was ordained in Lincoln Cathedral in 2012 and I am now in the third year of my curacy in the Parish of Spalding. Whilst I may be the only person in my church who comes from ethnic minority background, the congregation has been very kind to me since the first day I arrived in the parish. I am very grateful that God has called me to this place to serve Him. Looking back to the years since I began exploring my vocation, the journey has not been easy but I do believe that Jesus has been walking alongside me as I discern my calling and my ministry. As St Paul puts it, *'the One who calls you is faithful'* (1 THESSALONIANS 5:24)

The journey of discernment can be both exciting and worrying, full of surprises and disappointments, but we are not alone as we explore our calling. God is always there guiding us as we journey together.

SHARON KAYE

TEAM VICAR AND ASSISTANT AREA DEAN

'Why would God call me?'

MY NAME IS SHARON KAYE AND I AM 42 YEARS OLD. I WAS BORN IN BRADFORD, YORKSHIRE. DESPITE MY MOTHER BEING A CATHOLIC AND MY FATHER A METHODIST, I HAVE ALWAYS ATTENDED ANGLICAN CHURCHES. I ENJOYED BEING PART OF MY LOCAL CHURCH FROM THE AGE OF THREE AND ATTENDED WITH MY BROTHER AND SISTER – AND MAINLY MY GODPARENTS. IN MY EARLY TEENS WHEN MY BROTHER AND SISTER STOPPED GOING TO CHURCH AND MY GODPARENTS WERE TOO OLD TO ATTEND I CONTINUED. I HAD A STRONG NETWORK OF FRIENDS THAT MADE IT ATTRACTIVE FOR ME TO KEEP ATTENDING.


I was fortunate that God blessed our church with a new member – a woman in her early 30's willing to share her faith openly and honestly with our small group of girls. I could see clearly that she had something that made her different. She talked about a relationship with Jesus in a way I had never encountered before, and was clearly drawn to Him. I finally decided to become a Christian at a CYFA

camp a few months later at the age of 15. I knew that God was with me because I felt a peace that I had never experienced before and knew in an instant that my life had radically changed and would never be the same again.

It was challenging being part of a small group of teenage girls within an elderly congregation. I eventually moved churches to become part of another church, which had a lively group of young people and was saddened to leave the church that I had grown up in and loved. It was in this new church where I met and married my husband of 16 years. We spent many years with another couple running the teenage youth. It was truly a privilege to journey with a group of young people for so many years, and to see God at work in their lives throughout their early teenage years and into adulthood.

Before pushing the doors to ordination I trained and worked as a Primary Teacher for 9 years. I knew somewhere in the back of my mind I would work for God





full time, but would deny that I felt called to ordination. Why would God be calling me? What on earth would I have to offer? Would I be enough for God? These were the thoughts that ran through my head – yet I would push them to the back and carry on with my teaching career. I was fortunate to have a Head Teacher who encouraged me to do things that I would never have imagined I could do, and this helped me to develop skills and confidence for my current role. It was a blessing to work in a Church of England School and be able to share my faith openly with pupils, staff and parents.

My husband is also a Vicar and we were lucky to begin our Ordination journey together, spending two years training in Bristol before returning back to Bradford Diocese to carry out our curacies in separate churches. We both worked $\frac{3}{4}$ time each – which enabled us to start a family and care for our son with a little help from family.

I currently work as a Team Vicar within a team of four churches with pastoral responsibility for two of them. They are both different in their congregation and church tradition and I thoroughly enjoy the contrast that this brings. My husband works part-time in a neighbouring team too which works well for us as a family as we continue to raise our young son.

As well as being part of a Team Ministry and looking after my congregations, I also have other hats that I wear from time to time. I thoroughly enjoy the time I spend at my local Hospice taking services and taking a chaplaincy role. Of course I love the work that I do with my local schools, engaging with children, parents and staff. I feel incredibly privileged to be able to take weddings, baptisms and especially funerals for families. I am currently the Assistant Area Dean for our Deanery and the ME champion for my diocese. I see my role as simply encouraging those from a Minority Ethnic background to explore whether God is calling them into a vocation of some description, and to be there to journey alongside individuals if needed. I would hope to be a role model for not just those from a ME background but for women, working mothers and for me – most importantly – God.





AZARIAH FRANCE-WILLIAMS

ORDAINED PIONEER MINISTER

'Keep on keeping on'


MY NAME IS AZARIAH FRANCE-WILLIAMS AND I WAS BORN IN LEEDS IN 1975. MY PARENTS ARE BOTH FROM THE PICTURESQUE HOLIDAY DESTINATION OF NEVIS. BOTH MUM AND DAD WERE MEMBERS OF ST THOMAS LOWLAND PARISH CHURCH BEFORE EMBARKING ON THE SEA VOYAGE TO THE UK. MY MATERNAL GRANDMOTHER WAS THE CHURCH ORGANIST AND CHOIR LEADER, AND MY PATERNAL GRANDFATHER WAS A LAY READER AND HEAD TEACHER OF THE ATTACHED PRIMARY SCHOOL. I SPENT A MONTH WITH MY WIFE ANNA IN NEVIS IN 2009 AND WE VISITED ST THOMAS' GRAVEYARD WHEREUPON I WAS TOLD THAT MY PATERNAL GRANDFATHER, WHOM I'D NEVER MET HAD PRAYED FOR ONE OF HIS CHILDREN TO ENTER THE MINISTRY. MY GRANDFATHER'S PRAYER SKIPPED A GENERATION AND FORMED PART OF THE WHISPER CALLING ME TO SERVE GOD AS A PRIEST.

My mum and dad have now both died but faith was part of their lives. My mum in particular navigated the prejudice she encountered in her local Anglican church and my

Anglican trajectory was dislocated as the church where she found a warm welcome and hearty hymn singing was the Pentecostal church. When I was very small mum and dad remained friends but not married so the church became an extended family to me as my mum and I soldiered on. Now as a man I am privileged to have a gorgeous wife Anna and three children who take their mum's genes for looks. Anna's mother is Indian Malaysian and her father is white English. Our children defy the various categories on ethnicity forms and usually end up as mixed – 'other'. This is worrying as the 'other' can suffer from the majorities' ignorance expressed by exclusion, or making the 'other' exotic and a novelty item. Living in London our children have lots of models of multiple heritage families around them. However if and when we live in less diverse community I trust they will have graceful resilience to prejudice and loving response to ignorance.

Prior to my calling to Anglican ministry I trained and served as a Pentecostal pastor in Leeds. This was my home





church and first family. I enjoyed it immensely. I then worked for Youth for Christ for a couple of years. This was in combination with a Masters degree in leadership and mission. I noticed my theology was morphing and no longer fit as comfortably with my formative values and ideals. My work with Youth for Christ and my Masters degree had exposed me to what God was doing in other denominations. The whisper to the Anglican Church grew steadily stronger.

I remember being at a conference where after receiving prayer I had a clear vision of myself wearing a dog collar. With my theology no longer fitting the box it was forged in I saw in the Anglican Church a broader, older tradition, with greater latitude for theological exploration. A year later I was a youth minister in an Anglican church. A couple of years after that I was a student worker of another Anglican church, and a little time after that I was training at Trinity College in Bristol. This was a great experience and by that time I'd read 'Jesus is Dread' by Robert Beckford. I was more aware of preserving my identity and heritage within a context based around English values and ideals.

I now am Pioneer Priest in Charge at St Francis Dalgarno Way in London. We are a church in the heart of the

Dalgarno Estates. Our congregations are formed of and work within our community. I have been there close to five years and we have felt really privileged to contribute to the faith journey of the local populace. We enjoy positive ways of being community, faith wise through our Sunday congregation, and 'Stars' our Messy Church congregation. We also celebrate our common humanity through a vibrant toddler group, Open Mic nights, and a tea and conversation group for the retired. We are also active with West London Citizens which is a community organising movement. Finally, I am a lecturer with Westminster Theological Centre where I teach on faith in society.

Both my mother Elvira and father Rolston had a phrase they'd often use which was:

'keep on keeping on'

And I offer this to those of you considering exploring the vocation of priesthood.

SHARON PRENTIS

CURATE AND MISSION SUPPORT OFFICER

'In tune with God's song'


CHURCH HAS ALWAYS FEATURED PROMINENTLY IN MY FAMILY. MY PARENTS CAME TO BRITAIN FROM THE CARIBBEAN IN THE 1960S AND SETTLED IN YORKSHIRE WHERE I WAS BORN.

In the Caribbean, my grandmother was an Anglican, but when my parents came to England, my mother chose to go to a black majority church instead as, in those times, they were not made to feel welcome at the local Church of England congregation. From an early age, I remember being taken to Sunday School and learning to recite 'memory verses', which were key scriptures from the Bible. John 3:16 was one of the first ones I learnt to memorise and I was struck by the notion that God so loved me.

As a teenager I was restless with heightening political awareness, so decided to explore different denominations and at 16 joined the local Baptist youth group where I made a commitment to become a Christian. Later I met my husband Calvert at another Church youth group. We got

married and he went on to train for the Anglican ministry. After he was ordained we spent several years in the West Midlands and Yorkshire where I became immersed in church and parish life. With a community development background it seemed the most natural thing to do. When our daughter started school I went back to university to gain postgraduate qualifications and became a lecturer in higher education. For several more years I continued teaching but was also very involved with the church and being a part of community life as school governor and director of a charity. It was during that time, I experienced a gentle but persistent feeling that I had to explore ordained ministry. Initially, I was unsure about this; however, the encouragement of others helped me seriously consider becoming a priest. In 2010, with the support of family and friends, I went to a Bishops Advisory Panel and was recommended for training. While at theological college I continued to work at university and was ordained priest in 2014. I am currently employed as the Mission Support





Officer on a part-time basis for the Diocese of Southwark while serving as curate in Redhill, Surrey. My diocesan role involves advising parishes on community engagement and helping them document their church growth plans. It is a real privilege to see individuals exercise their gifts by working together to live out their faith in order to make the church relevant in their neighbourhoods.

At times during my vocation journey, there had been moments of questioning why God allowed me to experience various things before becoming a priest. Only now do I truly appreciate that nothing in life is wasted in God's economy. My faith has always related to my social and cultural contexts, and as a minister, I understand that I am called to 'be me' as an example of God's redemptive love and grace. It is because I have received it, I am called to live it. Faith is something I cannot keep to myself. As someone who is interested in social justice, my concerns have increasingly become focused on those on the fringes of society. For me, what it means to be a follower of Christ is to work in ways that challenge unjust social structures and anything that undermines the God-given worth of individuals, families and communities. This inevitably means the restoration of godly principles that support equality and justice. To bring others into a relationship with Christ is my mandated mission in the world.

As a priest, I believe there is a dynamic truth to the Gospel and I am eager to communicate why faith makes a difference. It is such a privilege to be with people at key points in their lives: baptisms, weddings, funerals and other highs and lows. My heart-felt desire is for everyone to experience a revelation of God's Kingdom where they discover they are totally accepted by God and affirmed in their gifts – whatever they may be. Other interests, apart from chocolate, are writing and exploring the connections between spirituality, community and church. I like the verse in the Bible that says that God sings a song over us. My own experience has been one of God affirming those things that make my heart sing, so that I in turn can join in with his song, the song of God the Creator that enables us to become part of his melody to the world.





SHEMIL MATHEW

CURATE


'We need missionaries to the UK'

I WAS BORN AND BROUGHT UP IN THE SOUTHERN INDIAN STATE OF KERALA IN AN ANCIENT CHRISTIAN FAMILY IN THE TRADITION OF ST THOMAS. I MADE MY FIRST COMMITMENT TO CHRISTIAN MINISTRY AT THE AGE OF FIVE IN ANSWER TO AN ALTAR CALL. HOWEVER, MY BROTHER'S DEATH LED ME TO QUESTION MY DECISION LATER ON IN LIFE.

When I was in university, thanks to the influence of the Christian Union, I felt that I was being called for ministry, possibly with the church, and I decided to re-commit myself to that call in 1998. In the final year of my first degree in English and English literature I decided to take a year out after the degree before pursuing theological education. I had an option to work either in North India or in the UK; I was keen to go to North India. However, during a visit to my university, the Most Rev Dr Barry Cennydd Morgan, the current Archbishop of Wales, stated, 'We need missionaries to the UK.' So, in response to that call, I decided to take up the challenge and come over to the UK. After my gap year, I was convinced that

I should discern the calling for ordained ministry. I met up with my local minister and, as is the practice in the CSI, I was recommended to go before the bishop for a meeting. However, he advised me to continue with higher studies, possibly overseas. As a result, with his blessing, I joined Redcliffe College, Gloucester, for a degree in theology. After the course, I met my bishop again. Being himself a theology tutor, he recommended that I do a research degree. Even though he did not say 'no' to my plans for ministry, I thought that God, through the bishop's advice, might be indicating that I not become an ordained minister with the Church but stay an academic theologian. I met my wife who is an ordained minister while I was doing my research degree at the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies. When we got married and moved to Sri Lanka, I thought that God might be asking me to consider not being in the ordained ministry but supporting my wife and maybe working as a theological educator without being ordained. However, one of the





first questions the diocesan bishop in Sri Lanka asked me was whether I would like to be ordained. My answer was 'No' so he asked me to think and pray about it. We then returned to the UK for three months for CMS training and fundraising. I met with a number of people and they all encouraged me to consider the calling for ordained ministry seriously. I also visited my home diocese again and consulted our bishop, who said he believed that I had a calling for ordained ministry and sent a letter to the Bishop of Colombo recommending me for training. We moved back to the UK in 2010 for a period of maternity and study leave. During my MA studies I became increasingly convinced that I would like to confess and practice theology rather than limiting myself to academic theology. Moreover, my calling to ministry kept raising its head so I decided to meet up with the vicar of a nearby parish to discuss that. He advised me to get in touch with the DDO of Gloucester. We had many meetings over the year. In between, I again went to India and met up with the priest and the bishop there who recommended me and gave me their blessings to undertake the discernment process with the C of E. I also spent much time reading books recommended by my DDO. One book in particular that influenced me was 'The Life and Work of a Priest' by Bishop John Pritchard.

I did my formational training at Ripon College, Cuddesdon alongside an MTh from Oxford. My academic interest is in Hinduism and my MTh thesis is in the controversial area of multiple religious belonging. During my time in Cuddesdon alongside a number of other friends from minority ethnic backgrounds we started a network called Anglican Minority Ethnic Network (AMEN) that aims to connect, encourage, and support people who consider themselves as of 'minority' ethnicity. I was ordained as a deacon in July 2014. I currently work as a curate in Astwick Vale Benefice in Peterborough diocese, and am looking forward to being ordained as a priest in 2015.

MINA SMALLMAN

ARCHDEACON

'Here I am, Lord'

MY JOURNEY TO FAITH WAS QUITE STRAIGHT FORWARD, ONCE I DISCOVERED WHO JESUS WAS MY BELIEF IN HIM NEVER WAVERED. WHAT WAVERED WAS MY COMMITMENT TO LIVE AS A CHRISTIAN AND IT WAS MY CHILDHOOD CHURCH'S LACK OF COMMITMENT TO YOUTH MINISTRY AND POOR BIBLICAL TEACHING THAT DROVE ME AWAY FROM CHURCH AS A TEENAGER AND THEN AGAIN IN MY LATE TWENTIES.


As a baby I was baptised in the Church of Scotland which was the homeland of my mother. Conveniently we lived next door to the church so it was the obvious choice for my parents, not that my parents were regular attendees. It was only when I reached around six years old, and my mum no doubt wanted a bit of peace and quiet on a Sunday morning, that she or my older sister would walk me around the corner to the back entrance of the church which led into Sunday School. I would be dropped off and collected at the end of the session until I was old enough to take myself. That was when I was around seven. In those

days parents didn't seem to have the same anxieties about letting their children run free as they do now.

I loved Sunday School and took each of the bible stories deep into my heart. I loved this man Jesus and I knew he loved me, I understood that he had given his life for me. Even at that tender age I understood what sacrifice meant as I was living that reality nearly every day in my home life. For any of you who have seen the film Matilda, I can very much identify with her story, so Jesus was indeed my rock and my strength. I found peace, stability and security at church and school.

It wasn't until the 1990s that I was going to find my way back to Church for good. I had made a vow that if and when I did return to Church, it would be forever. The reason I had stayed away was because of weaknesses I had in my character and commitment as I understood it then. I never stopped believing in God - in fact I have and have always had a very strong testimony of God's love and saving





grace. My return to education and entrance to university was as a direct result of God's encouragement to do so.

My return to church was to my local Anglican church which was part of New Wine network. Things were very different to my past experiences of church. They were all very welcoming. There was a worship band and they spoke about the gifts of the Spirit, which all felt very alien to me. But it was through those gifts of the Spirit that God would begin to heal and to speak to me about a greater call.

At that time I had been teaching for some years and I was a Head of Faculty in a secondary school. I loved teaching and I suppose was well on my way to a deputy headship or even a headship. My career path seemed pretty mapped out; I was being encouraged to apply for senior positions and didn't want them as it would have taken me away from the children. Eventually, I was persuaded to apply for an Assistant Principal post by the Principal who allowed me to write my own job description.

So when God began to call me to do more in church I felt very challenged and confused. Every time I was invited to lead a particular ministry in church I was so nervous. People would say 'why are you nervous'? 'You do upfront stuff in your day job all the time'. But this felt very different to me. This was about not letting God down and

being able to maintain the reverence and sanctity of each ministry with true Christian integrity.

So you can imagine my surprise when one day during a service I heard a voice say, 'one day you will do this'. I was totally perplexed and confused. Our then curate, a woman, was doing an all-age service: she was giving the talk.

It took months and many recognising a call in me before I plucked up the courage to speak to my vicar, who said he wasn't at all surprised. One thing he said stayed with me: 'don't be in hurry - this journey is up to God'. He also gave me a scripture verse to hold onto: *The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.* (1 THESSALONIANS 5:24)

This passage has been spoken over me in prayer and sent in emails so many times, by people who don't know each other, it is quite uncanny.

By the time I had started my training I was in fact a senior manager in a secondary school and still loved teaching. But I had a fire burning within me to serve God as a Stipendiary Priest that just would not go away. One of the biggest challenges many people find is plucking up courage to begin the discernment process, it is accepting that God has called you! You with all your imperfections and weaknesses, 'surely I'm not holy enough'.

I often think of poor Moses telling God, 'I'm slow of speech can you send someone else?'

Or Jeremiah imploring God saying, 'I can't speak for you! I'm too young!'

I would like to encourage you to recognise that God prepares us long before we even get to church. The preparation began in your mother's womb. So be brave step out of the shadows and share what you think God is asking of you. There's much you can do to begin the discernment process. Attend local vocation events in your diocese. These are not just for those who feel called to ordained ministry and can help you see the wide variety of ministries in churches.

Once I put down my fears and said, '*Here I am Lord*', God has given me all I have needed to fulfil his purposes. On September 15th 2013 at Chelmsford Cathedral I became The Archdeacon of Southend and the Church of England's first black female senior leader. Our God is certainly a God of surprises.





CARL RAMSAY

VICAR, AND CATHEDRAL PREBENDARY

'God will provide'

MY NAME IS CARL RAMSAY. I WAS BORN IN JAMAICA, THE FIRST OF TWO CHILDREN TO VIVIAN AND IVY RAMSAY. AFTER SECONDARY SCHOOL I WORKED AS A PRE-TRAINED TEACHER IN A PRIMARY SCHOOL AND THEN WORKED AS A CIVIL SERVANT WITH A GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENT.

I have always been involved in the life of the church, from serving at the altar, Sunday School teacher, youth fellowship leader, chorister and on the church council. During this time I was involved in community work. During my teenage years I had always felt a pull towards full time work in the church but was never too sure what it was. Members of my home church were always encouraging me to offer myself for the ordained ministry but I would always say 'no'. At one of the youth camps that I arranged one summer, we had a speaker from the Church Army. He explained how, as a full time worker, I had the opportunity to do community as well as church related work. That got me very intrigued and after a lot of prayer, discussion and interviews I came to England to the

Wilson Carlile College of Evangelism to be trained as a Church Army Officer.


It was within those three years that the formal training of my theological understanding and formation took place. They were very challenging times; the only black man in college for the first year, from a sunny and hot country and the 'food'! Despite the differences I had three very good years.

After commissioning I returned to Jamaica to work in Montego Bay with five churches, but with special responsibility for two.

On returning I got married to Joan, we then had a daughter Toni-Ann. My ministry in Jamaica was very wide and varied, immersing myself into church and community life. I have always been very conscious of the responsibility and privilege I had in working with, and leading, God's people.

After five years working in the Diocese of Jamaica, I came back to England with my family. I was appointed as the





project manager to a community project (The Branch), a joint project between the Church Army and the Diocese of Lichfield. This job was very community based but I was also licensed to the local church. During my time at the project I was asked and encouraged again and again about the ordained ministry. Eventually I started exploring and after going through the usual channels, I was accepted for training non-residentially on the West Midlands course at Queens College, Birmingham. I found the process very good and helpful; it catered for my needs and supported me in my 'day' job.

In 2015 I will have been ordained for 25 years. What a privilege it has been. To be with people at the highs and lows of their lives, laughing and crying with them. Working out together God's plan for us in whatever the situations are and being aware of God's constant love and protection.

Just before ordination we were blessed with another child, Mark Anthony. Life as a curate was very fulfilling and I learned so much. The church tradition was very different to where I am most comfortable but I wanted a new and different experience. The training incumbent and congregation knew that, and they were very encouraging.

I am now in my second parish as an incumbent. I have served on many diocesan committees and boards,

including Chair of the CMEA in the Diocese of Lichfield, Chaplain to the Mothers' Union, Cathedral Council and was made a Prebendary of the Cathedral ten years ago.

When I reflect on my journey so far, I am overwhelmed by the generosity of people and how God has used me and them for the furthering of His kingdom. I can clearly remember the words of my father when I first told him that I was going to be trained as a Church Army Officer. He asked would I get a wage at the end of my training and I said I did not know, so he said 'How will you live?' my reply '*God will provide*'. He was not pleased at all. He thought his years of spending money educating me were now wasted. But those words '*God will provide*' have stood the test of time. I did believe, and still believe, that God will provide. I had confidence in my calling and so when things were challenging, and they were, I was able to weather the storm.

We need to believe in ourselves, in others and trust God.

MARTHA WEATHERILL

DIOCESAN LINK PERSON (DLP) FOR THE DIOCESE OF CHICHESTER

'A journey of discovery and formation'

MY NAME IS MARTHA GRACE WEATHERILL. I WAS BORN IN NIGERIA. I CAME TO THE UK WHEN I WAS 18 TO STUDY. I AM MARRIED AND I HAVE A DAUGHTER WHO IS 7 YEARS OLD. MY DAD IS A RETIRED PRIEST, I GREW UP IN A HOME WHERE GOD WAS ALWAYS AT THE CENTRE OF EVERYTHING WE DID AND SAID. I HAVE AN ANGLO-CATHOLIC BACKGROUND AND I CURRENTLY WORSHIP IN A WARM AND LIVELY EVANGELICAL CHURCH IN CHICHESTER DIOCESE.


As I reflect on several significant events in my life, I sense that my life has been leading towards priesthood even though at times, I did not realise it. Like Moses in the bible (a story that 'points' at me whenever I read it in terms of his calling as a servant and shepherd, an intercessor for God's people, a representative of God to his people declaring his love, forgiveness and blessings), I sense that God has organised and planned everything that has happened to me – joys and challenges alike –

with ordained ministry in mind in his amazingly humorous way. I also believe that God is an amazing planner and organiser!

Three years ago, I had a sense that God was calling me to ordained ministry in the Church of England, I was already a member of the pastoral care team, a member of the prayer ministry team, helping out in the ministry to the elderly and sometimes leading worship in care homes, but this sense of calling was asking more of me. This nudge got stronger and persistent and I battled with it because I never saw myself in that light and I never thought that God would call me. As weeks passed, the call got stronger.

During a Holy Communion service in a care home, one of the residents said that she appreciated our regular monthly visits without which, they would not feel part of a church family. As soon as she said this, I sensed a strong conviction. It seemed like looking after, nurturing and enabling God's people was my life's calling. It was





why I was born. Interestingly, that was the last time I saw her, because she went to be with the Lord not long after our conversation.

As time went by, the call got even stronger so I spoke to my vicar who suggested that I read books on vocation and also passed my details to the Diocesan Director of Ordinands (DDO). I have been working with the Assistant DDO for a while and she has been very supportive and helpful. I enjoy the time I spend with her.

I also attended the Minority Ethnic Vocations Conference in March 2014. I found it inspiring, encouraging and enabling. At this conference, I realised that what God was calling me to be and do was within reach. It was realistic because others had done it. It also gave me an opportunity to be mentored by a black female vicar.

God's calling on my life sometimes seems scary but I know that it is okay to be scared. I have resolved to feel the fear and do it anyway because when one is out of one's comfort zone faith steps in and that helps me to maintain an attitude of absolute trust in God.

My time as voluntary parish assistant has been especially formative for me, in terms of my calling. I am living and working with a fantastic community and team of people.

I receive support from my local church, supervisors and vicar. This has enabled me to engage in ministry while providing support and oversight. This is my first experience of formal ministry and I love it. I feel that my sense of calling is something that I simply can't help but do. It is not something that I chose and I have absolutely no idea why God would want to call me and yet at the same time, I am completely certain that He is calling me.

I am also one of the Bishop's appointed Diocesan Link Person (DLP) for the diocese. My job involves promoting recommendations from the Council for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns (CMEAC) and highlighting minority ethnic issues which may arise, or which ought to arise in the diocese. I particularly enjoy networking and meeting with other DLPs during our residential conferences.

What I love most about the Church of England is its acceptance, diversity, welcome, openness, tolerance and willingness to accept people the way they are with an opportunity for them to flourish and grow. It reminds me of the United Kingdom.

With regards to the future, I have no idea where this exploration will lead. The amazement of Christian ministry is that we never fully know the whole picture but

I pray that I will still be trusting Jesus, doing whatever he asks and enjoying life to its fullest. I hope that God will make me into the kind of person that will enable, encourage and equip others.





NEXT STEPS

THE CHURCH OF ENGLAND IS COMMITTED TO ENCOURAGING THOSE FROM A VARIETY OF ETHNIC BACKGROUNDS TO EXPLORE ORDAINED MINISTRY. IT IS VITALLY IMPORTANT THAT THE PRIESTHOOD IS SUFFICIENTLY DIVERSE TO MINISTER ACROSS THE VERY WIDE SPECTRUM OF ETHNICITIES THAT MAKE UP COMMUNITIES WITHIN THE UK. THIS IS AN EXCITING TIME TO BE IN MINISTRY AS THE CHURCH REACHES OUT IN FRESH WAYS TO ALL THE PEOPLE IN THIS COUNTRY.

The discernment of a vocation to ordained ministry is a shared process. You may have a sense that God is calling you to serve him in this way, or others may have approached you and asked you to consider this. Often it is a mixture of both an internal and external calling. The discernment process begins at the local level so your first step is to have a good conversation about your sense of calling with your vicar or chaplain. He or she should help you explore further, and if appropriate will refer you to a member of the vocation team in your diocese. You will be encouraged to explore your sense of calling in depth over a period of time and to test that it is realistic, informed

and obedient. Ordained ministry is demanding in a number of areas and the Church has careful processes in place to ensure that if recommended and trained you will be able to flourish in ministry.

Your diocese may also have a Diocesan Link Person (DLP) and/or a Minority Ethnic Vocation Champion. Their roles are to encourage and support Anglicans from a diversity of backgrounds to fulfil their potential and calling in the Church of England. CMEAC – the Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns, and AMENCofE – the Anglican Minority Ethnic Network are also bodies which can be approached for support and guidance.

<https://amencofe.wordpress.com/>

www.twitter.com/amencofe

[#AMENCofE](https://twitter.com/amencofe)



THE CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

Those who are exploring a possible calling to ordained ministry are assessed against the following criteria.

- A Vocation
- B Ministry within the Church of England
- C Spirituality
- D Personality & Character
- E Relationships
- F Leadership & Collaboration
- G Faith
- H Mission & Evangelism
- I Quality of Mind

Full details of the Criteria for Selection can be found by visiting the vocation section on the Church of England website: vocation.churchofengland.org

TO DO

- Pray for God's guidance
- Speak to your vicar or chaplain and to others who know you well and can give objective advice
- Make contact with the DLP or ME Vocation Champion in your Diocese or contact CMEAC
- Meet with other ME clergy
- Read about what it means to be a priest or deacon
- Visit a variety of Anglican churches so that you experience the breadth of the CofE
- Ask to be referred to one of the vocation team in your diocese
- Attend a Minority Ethnic Vocation Conference
- The process of discernment is very thorough and rigorous. All areas of your life will be discussed which may feel intrusive.
- The church is not looking for perfection, but needs to know that you can be honest, transparent and robust.
- If you are under 30, visit www.callwaiting.org.uk

TO BE AWARE OF

To be considered for Anglican ministry you need to be a regular communicant member of the Church of England and well known and respected in your church.

Candidates must expect to work with the Diocesan Vocation team for at least 12–18 months before being sent to a national Bishops' Advisory Panel (BAP) for possible selection.

If recommended training may be full time residential or part time non-residential over two years or three depending on age and prior learning.

The church currently pays all training fees. In addition a means tested maintenance allowance is awarded to those in residential training.

There are no national upper age limits set for ordained ministry but each diocese has its own age policies in place.

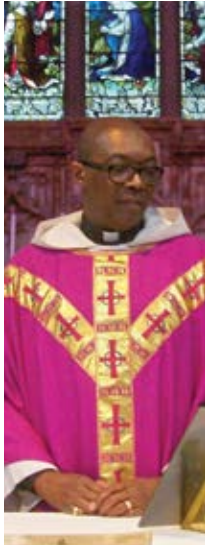
Candidates are required to live within the guidelines contained in Issues in Human Sexuality (1991).

Candidates who are divorced and remarried or married to someone who has been divorced need to be prepared to undertake an investigative process regarding this.

Candidates are asked to complete a financial statement.

Candidates are asked to fulfil the requirements of an enhanced DBS.





vocation.churchofengland.org