

The Church of England has appointed Dr Sanjee Perera as Archbishops' Adviser on Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns.



Dr Perera, currently a Research Fellow at the Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations at Coventry University, and Research Associate with the Open University School of Law, will be based in the Church of England's Mission and Public Affairs Division as well as advising the Archbishops of Canterbury and York.

She takes up the role in the New Year after having held a number of university posts. She was most recently Research Fellow with the University of Birmingham, running the Minority Anglicanism Project, a major study into the experiences of UK Minority Ethnic (UKME) people in the Church of England.

Dr Perera also serves as an adviser on inclusion and diversity both to the Church of England's Setting God's People Free programme and to Durham University's Common Awards Programme of training for ordained ministry.

An active member of the Church of England for more than 20 years, she has held a number of voluntary church roles from Sunday School teacher to youth and children's work.

Her appointment comes after the [Anti-Racism Taskforce](#), a project of the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, was set up earlier this year. The nine-strong taskforce is carrying out preparatory work ahead of the launch in spring next year of the Archbishops' Commission on racism.

Dr Perera succeeds Dr Elizabeth Henry, who left earlier this year after seven years in the post. Dr Chigor Chike has acted as [Interim National Adviser on Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns](#) since August.

Dr Perera said: "I am delighted to be appointed as the new Archbishops' Adviser on Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns. Having admired the extraordinary impact that Dr Elizabeth Henry, alongside CMEAC, has had on the Church of England, I am very aware that I shall be continuing the pioneering work of others, building on existing projects and networks.

"This calling has long pursued me over the decades in my work in voluntary, advisory and service capacities across a number of Church of England and wider Anglican Communion contexts.

"I am grateful to have such a significant national responsibility to carry out this work and contribute to the mission and calling of the Church. I ask for your prayers and support in this endeavour."

The Dean of Manchester, Rogers Govender, who is Chair of the Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns (CMEAC) said: "I am delighted that Sanjee is to be the next Archbishops' Adviser for CMEAC. She is already known to many of us in the Church of England and brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to this role. I look forward to working with her in the coming years as we seek a more racially just and inclusive Church of England."

The Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell, said: "As a member of CMEAC, I can't say how delighted I am that Sanjee has been appointed as the next national Adviser.

"I have worked with Sanjee on a number of CMEAC related projects in recent years, and I know her to be a creative theologian and a visionary and strategic thinker.

"She is also a keen amateur lepidopterist. Perhaps this last quality might turn out to be the most useful: Sanjee will help create a butterfly effect, so that the very significant, but small and under-resourced work of CMEAC can change the whole of our Church making it more inclusive, more diverse, more like the community it serves and more like Christ."

The Revd Dr Malcolm Brown, Director of the Church of England's Mission and Public Affairs Division, said: "I am very pleased that we shall be welcoming Dr Sanjee Perera into the role as Advisor to CMEAC and to the Archbishops at this crucial time when the work of the Taskforce to combat racism is under way and leading toward the establishment of a Commission to drive long term change.

"Sanjee comes to us with a strong track record of supporting the Church of England in its work in this field and interdisciplinary academic skills that will be an enormous resource for us all.

"I am immensely grateful to The Revd Canon Dr Chigor Chike who has acted as Interim Adviser since the summer, and glad that he and Sanjee will have a few weeks to work together to ensure a smooth handover."

**Note to Editors:**

- The Church of England's Anti-Racism Taskforce was set up in October. It is carrying out preparatory work for a permanent new Archbishops' Commission on racism due to be set up in 2021.
- There are currently five serving bishops from UK minority ethnic (UKME) backgrounds in the Church of England.
- Only four per cent of serving clergy identify as being from a UKME background, according to the latest statistics.
- A tenth of people recommended this year for training for ordained ministry in the Church of England were from UKME backgrounds.

- As part of its work, the Taskforce is examining more than 160 formal recommendations since 1985 on racial justice in the Church of England, the overwhelming majority made in reports from the Committee for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns (CMEAC) and its predecessor, the Committee on Black Anglican Concerns.

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