

The members of the Archbishops' Anti-racism Taskforce said:

Ahead of Racial Justice Sunday which is due to be marked this year on the 14th February we wanted to highlight our pastoral concern at the abuse and threats received by Jarel Robinson Brown over recent days.

We note that Jarel swiftly apologised for both the contents and timing of his tweet concerning Captain Sir Tom Moore. As a taskforce we are united in our admiration at the personal generosity and example of Captain Sir Tom Moore.

We believe that no tweet, whatever its contents and by whomever it is sent, should result in the subsequent level of abuse and threat that Jarel has received in both mainstream media and on social media. The level of abuse has been staggering as has been the racist and homophobic nature of some of that abuse.

The description of his treatment as a “social media lynching” held deep resonance for many of us.

We have noted the original response from the Diocese of London and share with others concern over its content and tone. The original response announced a review of Jarel’s actions. We would urge the Diocese to broaden that review to include its own initial statement. Whilst awaiting the outcome of that review the Diocese should give serious consideration to removing the original statement from its website.

We welcome the recent statement from the Bishop of London, its pastoral emphasis and the work + Sarah has done in seeking to put in place pastoral support. We also welcome the acknowledgement that the initial response of the diocese has contributed to a fracturing of trust both towards and within the church from United Kingdom Minority Ethnic (UKME) clergy and ordinands.

We share Bishop Sarah’s concern over reports that UKME candidates have withdrawn from the ordination process and would urge both those who have done so and who are considering doing so to keep faith at this difficult and challenging time.

We would urge all diocesan bishops to pay particular attention to the wellbeing of their UKME clergy and ordinands at this time and to seek out their responses.

As a taskforce we are continuing our work on our final report which is due to be published on 22 April 2021 – Stephen Lawrence Day. We will publish an update on our work before the end of this month.

As we prepare to mark Racial Justice Sunday we do so in keen recognition of the healing and restorative power of the love of God to be found in Jesus Christ. We also recognise the call for churches and individuals to be communities and agents of reconciliation in the midst of divisions both in our church and country.

We look forward to working with all of those committed to the flourishing of racial justice in church and society for a time such as this.