

An independent network for people training for ordained ministry in the Church of England who are from minority ethnic backgrounds has been launched.

UKME Ordinands

The UKME (UK Minority Ethnic) Ordinands and Curates group hopes to meet every three months to provide a voice and support for a growing number of UKME ordinands and curates.

The group has been set up by former junior doctor Angela Sheard, who is training at Queen's Foundation theological education institution in Birmingham and former biomedical scientist Tariro Matsveru who was ordained in June and is now a curate in King's Heath, Birmingham.

Revd Tariro, who was born in Zimbabwe and trained at Cranmer Hall in Durham, said the group aims to support ordinands and curates across the country.

"We want to encourage and support the vocations of ordinands and curates of UKME/Global Majority Heritage in the Church of England within dioceses and theological colleges," she said.

"We want to also bring to the attention of the Church the challenges being faced by UKME/GMH ordinands and curates and join the Church of England's efforts in challenging these issues."

The group has been set up as the proportion of people from UKME backgrounds starting training for ordained ministry in the Church of England rose last year to 10.9%.

A total of 8.9% of stipendiary clergy ordained last year were from a UKME background. This compares to 4.1% of the current pool of stipendiary clergy.

"More people are going into training for ordained ministry which is fantastic but they are often quite scattered around the country," Dr Sheard said.

"The network has a vision of UKME ordinands and curates flourishing and being celebrated within the Church as part of the body of Christ."

In a pre-recorded message, The Bishop of Dover, Rose Hudson-Wilkin, welcomed the launch of the group.

"We are saying by our very presence and offering ourselves for ministry that we belong in the church, we are here to serve, because that is our calling," she said.

"I am encouraged by the number of us who are knocking on the door but sometimes we have to push the door. We are not guests to be welcomed, we belong, it is our church and we are here to stay."

Dr. Sanjee Perera, Archbishops' Adviser for Minority Ethnic Anglican Concerns. said: "I am delighted to see the UKME Ordinands and Curates network launch.

"UKME ordinands and curates have long needed this space of fellowship, support and representation and I am thrilled that Angela and Tariro have responded with such extraordinary insight, to my invitation.

"I hope they will be a critical friend and a conversation partner to the Church of England, as we forge a space where everyone whatever their heritage, culture or ethnicity can flourish."

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