

Name: Cornelius Asghar

Age: 45

Original Home Village, Town or City: Nowshera, Pakistan

The Church in Blackburn Diocese where you are serving: The Parish of Chorley, St. Laurence and Chorley, St. Peter

Church Address: Chorley Parish Church of St Laurence, Union Street
Chorley, Lancashire, PR71EB

If applicable, what was your former job before entering ministry? Head Teacher

Tell us something about your journey towards ordination?

My path to the Ordained Ministry has been both extraordinary and life-changing. Growing up in a vicarage and working in diocesan education, I always sensed God's call to ministry - though fear and doubt often held me back.

Everything changed when I moved from Pakistan to the UK in 2019. At St Paul's Church in Blackpool, I found my spiritual home and was commissioned as an Authorised Lay Minister in 2021. The transformative MPower course helped me rediscover Christ as my personal Saviour, deepening my relationship with God.

Through prayer and the Holy Spirit's guidance - supported by my Vicar in Blackpool and an Asian missionary priest from Preston - I finally answered God's call in 2022. My two-year training at Emmanuel Theological College, and placement at St. Laurence's Chorley prepared me for ordination as a Deacon last year.

Now serving my curacy across St Laurence's and St Peter's churches in Chorley, I'm profoundly grateful for the spiritual growth and clarity this journey has brought. As I prepare for priestly ordination, I move forward with quiet confidence and peace, knowing I'm walking the path God has lovingly prepared for me.

What has been a) the most important thing you have learned and b) the most inspiring thing you have experienced during your training? (They can be different!)

Answer for A:

The most valuable lesson from my ordained ministry is that true leadership is shown through example. I've come to recognise the vital importance of living out Christ's teachings each day, demonstrating love, compassion and grace in all my interactions. This experience has reinforced how essential authenticity and integrity are in ministry, allowing me to encourage others and nurture disciples by consistently reflecting God's love in my words and actions.

Answer for B:

The most heartening aspect of my vocational training and curacy has been discovering the extraordinary openness and inclusivity of the Church of England. Observing the Church's wholehearted welcome to people from every background, belief and walk of life has been profoundly moving. This deep commitment to celebrating diversity while nurturing Christian unity stands as a powerful witness to the transformative, all-embracing nature of God's grace. Such experiences have inspired me to cultivate a ministry that more

fully reflects Christ's limitless love for every individual.

What are some of the personal challenges and opportunities you face in your ministry in the coming year?

As I approach priestly ordination, I am mindful of both the challenges and opportunities ahead. A key challenge will be balancing the growing demands of parish ministry with my own spiritual life—ensuring that prayer, Scripture, and personal discipleship remain central, even amidst the busyness of pastoral duties. Stepping into the priesthood also brings deeper responsibilities: I must lead with Christ-like humility, grow in pastoral wisdom, and nurture my relationships, both within the church and at home with my family.

Yet this new chapter is filled with grace. I am particularly excited about presiding at the Eucharist—a sacred privilege that will deepen my connection to Christ and the congregation. The Diocese's emphasis on mission and 'new expressions' of church inspires me to engage creatively with those beyond our walls, sharing the Gospel in relational ways. I also look forward to discipling others, empowering lay ministry, and walking alongside people as they grow in faith.

Rooted in prayer and the Gospel, I trust God's grace to shape me as a priest—faithful in service, bold in mission, and always pointing others to Jesus.

Many more parishes have embraced online opportunities to engage with their local communities alongside their existing services; especially since the pandemic. Please indicate ways in which you may have done this already or what plans you may have to explore ways to reach people in the 'digital space' in the future:

During the COVID-19 pandemic, I seized the opportunity to strengthen community connections through digital ministry. This included live-streaming Sunday services for the Asian church and leading midweek online worship for St Paul's Church Blackpool, as well as completing MPower and Alpha courses virtually. These experiences underscored the vital role of digital outreach in fostering spiritual engagement beyond physical church walls.

Moving forward, I am keen to develop inclusive online services, particularly for those unable to attend in person—whether due to health, mobility, or work commitments. Plans include interactive initiatives like virtual prayer groups, online Bible studies, and digital discipleship programmes. However, I recognise that expanding our digital presence must be done responsibly. Safeguarding vulnerable participants is paramount, so all online interactions will adhere to diocesan guidelines, with secure platforms, moderated discussions, and clear protocols for pastoral care.

Bishop Philip has said: "I am committed to continuing the growth of the church in Lancashire, helping to build joyful Christian communities. I would love to see the Church of England in Lancashire being an ever-stronger voice for justice, especially for the poorest. And I believe children and young people need to be at the very heart of all that we do."

How will you seek to support the Bishop in fulfilling these aims?

As a curate in Chorley, I would champion Bishop Philip's vision by nurturing lively, welcoming congregations where faith thrives. Focusing on youth, I'd develop engaging initiatives—such as innovative school worship, youth groups, and all-age worship—to ensure younger generations shape church life. Advocating for justice, I'd partner with foodbanks, debt relief projects, and community organisers to tackle inequality, ensuring the Church speaks and acts for the vulnerable.

Encouraging both traditional and innovative ministry, I'd support lay leadership, small groups, and fresh expressions of church to foster sustainable growth. By prioritising discipleship and pastoral care, I'd help build resilient communities rooted in prayer and service.

Collaborating across parishes, I'd ensure Chorley's mission aligns with diocesan priorities—joyful witness, social justice, and intergenerational vitality—making Christ's love tangible in Lancashire.

What do you view as your most significant personal achievement? (This may be connected to your ordination training of course or it could be something else from another aspect of your life.)

One of my most significant achievements has been answering Christ's call to ministry, a journey rooted in prayer and spiritual growth. Moving from Pakistan to Lancashire required trust in Jesus, as I adapted to a new culture while deepening my faith. Through daily prayer and Scripture, God strengthened me, shaping my vocation and enriching my marriage. Mona (my wife) and I have grown together in Christ, supporting

one another in discipleship. Serving the faith community in Chorley has been a blessing, allowing me to share God's love and witness His work in others' lives. My training as ordained minister deepened my reliance on Jesus, confirming that true fulfilment comes from walking closely with Him

Tell us about your family/ loved ones:

My wife, Mona, is a devoted GP in Leigh. We've been married eight years and, though we've no children yet, we find great joy in serving our church together. Between her busy surgery hours, she lovingly helps both at church and vicarage—hosting meals, serving tea, and welcoming parishioners with warmth. Her kindness and generosity bless so many, including me. She's truly my greatest support.

What do you do to chill out and relax?

Cooking, prayer walks, reading books, and watching films are my favourite ways to unwind. I'm also trying to improve my gardening skills these days.