

Media questionnaire and brief biography: **Kaarina Leong**

Your age and also your original home village, town or city (i.e. the place you grew up):

Answer: I am 46 years old. My original town is Bishop's Stortford, Hertfordshire.

The church and location in Blackburn Diocese where you are serving:

Answer: I will be serving at Christ Church, Lancaster.

Tell us a bit about your family:

Answer: I have three children: Bella (19), Jonas (18) and Evelyn (16). My mother was Finnish and my father is Chinese Malaysian. I have one sister.

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

Answer: I was a teacher of Music and English, at both primary and secondary levels, mostly in Church of England schools.

Tell us something about your journey towards ordination?

Answer: I wanted to be a priest as a child, but women were not allowed to be ordained in this country at that time. My journey towards ordination reawakened in 2016 when Lancaster Priory allowed adult women to join the choir, and I was invited to be a chorister. Being inside the inspirational music which supported worship allowed me to prayerfully listen more deeply to a call which I have been hearing all my life.

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: Being a Christian in community is a necessity. How other people experience God is diverse and wonderful! We all have a piece of the puzzle, a new perspective.

Answer for b: Experiencing someone who looks like me (Chinese) presiding at the Eucharist for the first time only a year ago: representation is so important, as it lets someone realise that they can be in this part of God's story.

Since the pandemic many more parishes have also embraced online opportunities to engage with their local communities alongside their existing services. 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 ...

Answer: During the pandemic, I was involved in livestreaming services, as well as solo cantor for online services. As we have come out of the pandemic, online and radio broadcast services have continued to be so important, especially for connecting people who cannot be in the building for important events due to ill health or just being too far away. I hope to continue to bring our church community together in these ways, despite distance and obstacles.

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

Answer: The challenge of starting my ministry in a new parish is also an opportunity. I look forward to getting to know the people and the area, and discovering how God is already at work there.

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.)

Answer: Being a mother to my three amazing children.

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?

Answer: As someone who has worked with children and young people for most of my life, I too firmly believe that they must be at the heart of what we do. I also have a passion for listening to and speaking out for justice and enabling others to find their voices.

Tell us something people don't know about you that might surprise them?

Answer: When I was at university, I coded web pages as a part-time job.

Finally, when you get the chance, what do you do you chill out and relax?

Answer: I making music, gardening, and crocheting.