

**A Statement Issued by Lancashire Church Leaders
Regarding the forthcoming General Election
28 April 2010.**

'As Church Leaders in Lancashire, we call upon all people of goodwill, and especially our Christian brothers and sisters, to reject racist politics in the forthcoming General Election and local elections.

We therefore encourage people to vote in such a way as to prevent racist political parties making any more electoral gains - indeed to out-vote such parties where they have already been elected.

In particular, we urge people to reject the British National Party (BNP), English Defence League (EDL), National Front (NF) and similar political organisations for the following two reasons:

First - there is no place in mainstream British politics for dividing people on the grounds of ethnicity. The racist ideology of parties like the BNP, who speak of a "traditional British genotype", is not only inaccurate and misguided but is also contrary to our belief that "all people are created in the image of God".

Secondly - any further electoral success for the BNP and similar racist parties, could seriously undermine the patient, strategic work of healthy race relations which has been developing in the UK over many years. Britain can be proud of its status as a world leader in multi-culturalism, a status which is expressed in churches and communities across the country and which is to be further celebrated in coming years, not least with the Olympic and Paralympic Games coming to London in 2012.

As church leaders we do not endorse any particular political party and recognise that there are many social issues today which require much closer attention from elected politicians, not least those of housing, immigration, unemployment and the sheer speed of social change in some of our white working-class communities.

Remembering that our Lord came to minister among the poor and disadvantaged, we would urge you to question candidates about their commitment to the vulnerable and those on the margins of society. We believe a response to their need is called for by our Christian faith. Above

all else we call on everyone to reject the BNP and like-parties
as providing solutions to these issues.

We all have a responsibility to work for a more just society which will never
be achieved by those who seek to divide our society based on racist politics.'

The Revd Stephen Poxon (Methodist: N. Lancs District)

The Most Revd Patrick Kelly (RC: Liverpool Archdiocese)

The Rt Revd Terence Brain (RC: Salford Diocese)

The Rt Revd Michael Campbell OSA (RC: Lancaster Diocese)

Major Melvyn Jones (Salvation Army: Central North Division)

Major Mike Highton (Salvation Army: North Western Division)

The Revd Richard Church (URC: NW Synod)

The Rt Revd Nicholas Reade (C of E: Blackburn Diocese)

The Rt Revd John Goddard (C of E: Blackburn Diocese)

The Rt Revd Geoff Pearson (C of E: Blackburn Diocese)

Mrs Pat Golding (Quakers: Lancashire Central and North Area)

The Revd Andrew Funnell (NW Baptist Association)