

# The Bishop of Jarrow

## Right Reverend Sarah Clark

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Dear friends

I am sure that you have been as shocked and disturbed as I have been by the civil unrest that has erupted across our nation and has been experienced so personally in our own towns and cities within the Diocese. On Friday 2 August as the dreadful scenes in Sunderland unfolded, following the initial violence in Hartlepool I issued a statement expressing that horror and stating categorically **'Our Church Communities stand together with all condemning this awful violence & small minority who incite hatred and intimidation on our streets'**.

I was able to join the large gathering of families, community groups, people of faith and no faith, local people walking together through the scarred streets of Sunderland for peace. We began at the Minster and ended at the Mosque and showed the true Spirit of Sunderland. So many people from all walks of life have come together in communities throughout our Diocese and across our country to clear up the damage, to stand together, to pray, to show that heart and resilience that refuses to bow to the violence and racism that seeks to divide and break our relationships. I know some in our communities, especially those who are seeking asylum and refuge amongst us are fearful. Many are asking what should we do? What does this mean?

Asking such questions together as communities of faith is important as this does affect us all and we are all somehow part of the answer. Naturally I would call us all to pray for our new Government for wisdom and insight as they seek to respond and for protection for our police who are being hurt as they seek to protect others. We have a strong history in our churches and communities of welcome for those seeking sanctuary and we must hold to that welcome and keep the doors open. We also know that what is spoken, tweeted, posted, placed on Facebook and Instagram is being used to fan the flames.

The Apostle James writes, *'How great a fire is set ablaze by a small fire! And the tongue is a fire'* (James 3: 5/6). Perhaps the wisest act that we can do at the moment is to be mindful of our own words, conversations and posts even if we cannot do anything about what others do. But most of all we pray for that peace beyond our understanding to keep all our hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God and of his son Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, and grant us grace to be the bearers of that peace to those we meet.

+ Sarah Jarrow.

The Rt Revd Sarah Clark  
Bishop of Jarrow and Acting Bishop of Durham



Diocese of Durham

Blessing our communities in Jesus' name



THE CHURCH  
OF ENGLAND