

## Media Questionnaire: Deacons

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

**Answer:** Martin McDonald. Age 50. Born and raised in Wallasey into a Christian home way back in 1972 when dinosaurs walked the earth! My formative years involved regular attendance at the local 'family' church - St Albans Church, Wallasey

The church in Blackburn Diocese where you are serving:

**Answer:** My curacy will be at St Cuthbert's church in Fulwood. I am also the lead chaplain for Lancashire Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust (this is my full-time role).

Tell us about your family:

**Answer:** Happily married for the past 25 years to Tracey (physiotherapist). We live in Broughton, Preston with our two children Daisy (20) and Tom (18), two cats and five chickens.

If applicable, your former job before entering ministry?

**Answer:** I left home to train as a Registered Nurse in 1991 and have been working in nursing for 30 years, until I commenced ministry training. I found nursing to be a fulfilling and worthwhile career. This was a worthwhile and rewarding career and I really did love it. The majority of my work has been working in accident and emergency departments both in Lancashire and overseas.

What led you to take the steps towards ordination?

**Answer:** To be fair it came as a bit of a shock. I was well-established in my nursing career and was due to retire in the next five years. God, however, had other plans. There was definite call on my life to dedicate it to ministry. It appeared that every sermon, every worship song, every piece of scripture I read appeared to speak directly to me and, coupled with several affirmations, I decided to test the call and look what happened!

What's been the best thing about your training?

**Answer:** The generous orthodoxy of the college. Emmanuel Theological College is a warm and welcoming place to study. They are definitely invested in you as an individual and, whilst theological study is vital, the emphasis on formation allows for a more rounded development. And it helps that my formation group are lovely!

Can you say what is the most important thing you have learned during your training?

**Answer:** Simply that we are not undertaking ministry alone. It is just not possible to undertake ministry in your own strength. It is only possible with the aid of the Holy Spirit. To try and do it by yourself is pure folly.

Reflecting on the difficult past year, please share a few thoughts about how the pandemic has impacted on ministry at this time (you could reflect how people have adapted to the circumstances in different ways as part of this response) ...

**Answer:** As a hospital chaplain the pandemic has forced me to focus on what is important within my ministry. It has made me examine the liturgies I use and the appropriateness of the words. It has made me realise how important physical contact is within the boundaries of safe pastoral care. It has catapulted chaplaincy to the fore of people's minds and conversations; how vital a ministry it is and will continue to be. I am immensely proud that the chaplaincy service kept running throughout the pandemic, despite the obvious implications.

Meanwhile, what are some of your personal reflections on ministry in the post-pandemic period that lies ahead; the challenges and the opportunities?

**Answer:** I feel that we are yet to see the long-term effects of the pandemic and so the church needs to equip itself for a potential tsunami of mental health issues, anxiety, survivor guilt, anger at God, etc. But far from being a problem I believe this creates opportunities for unique pastoral situations. People, post pandemic, will be searching for meaning as to what they have experienced and I believe that the church is best placed to rekindle the lost practice of lament to help to reframe the pandemic to one of hope whilst acknowledging the pain that we have all experienced.

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

**Answer:** I am a qualified paraglider pilot.

What do you view as your most significant personal achievement, before or during training?

**Answer:** Raising a family alongside my wife Tracey, this brings me great joy.

How do you hope to continue to support the Diocesan Vision 2026 at a parish level?

**Answer:** I am particularly drawn to the part of the vision that highlights 'Being witnesses to Jesus Christ'. Meeting human needs with actions, as well as words, this ties in perfectly with the chaplaincy work in the hospital. We are moving the chaplaincy service forward by increasing our visibility and accessibility for patients, staff and visitors and being a visible witness within the hospital. Encouragingly, we are starting to see the fruit of this work.

How would you express your own vision for the church?

**Answer:** I would like to see even more reaching out beyond our walls into the places that are perhaps uncomfortable for us as church. I would also embrace the importance of the churches liturgical and sacramental heritage as I believe people are looking for something that they are unable to find in our modern society. Something that is deeply rooted, that you can hold onto and that you can't find anywhere else.

Finally, when you get the chance, how do you relax?

**Answer:** Well relaxation has been pretty low on the agenda for a few years with ordination training, work and family life. I am a keen mountain biker and love getting out in the local fells. I love a good meal with friends and I enjoy gardening with my wife, growing our vegetables and keeping chickens.