

## Media Questionnaire: Deacons

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

**Answer:** Matthew Rowley, 47, Stoke-on-Trent. I was born into a Christian family and attended a Pentecostal church. My Father died when I was six through cancer. This meant that my childhood was not easy but being a part of a church family helped.

The church in Blackburn Diocese where you are serving:

**Answer:** The Trinity Parish, (Hope Community Church, St Mark's Layton and St Luke's Staining)

Tell us about your family:

**Answer:** I am married to Lucy who works at Vets4Pets. I have three children, Emily 23, Isaac 18 and Daniel 10. I also have a grandson Harry who is 3 months old.

If applicable, your former job before entering ministry?

**Answer:** I have been full time in ministry serving with Church Army for 14 years. I trained for 4 years with Church Army and worked for 10 years commissioned. I served with Church Army for 6 years in Northern Ireland and 8 years in Blackpool.

What led you to take the steps towards ordination?

**Answer:** I responded to an invitation to follow Jesus at a Sunday school class and it was there that I started my journey of faith. I was later baptised at the age of 10. In 1994 I served on a mission scheme called TaskForce 2000 and when I returned in 1995, I began to serve in my local church. I have felt a calling to full-time ministry since the age of 12. It has been a gradual process from part-time youth and children's work to full-time and then from Lay ministry in Church Army. Alongside my own sense of call has been countless confirmations from those I have grown up with and ministered to in the faith. To be ordained, to share in the sacraments and walk with people in their journey of faith is a privilege I am looking forward to.

What's been the best thing about your training?

**Answer:** Journeying with others, being challenged and encouraged has been a highlight.

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

**Answer:** The most important thing is to walk with Jesus and to live a life of prayer. It's out of that relationship that the strength, inspiration, courage, and perseverance will come. If I have nothing, I will have nothing to give.

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:** Firstly, the pandemic has affected face to face relationships. For me, I have had to invest in learning new skills on the computer and using online platforms to run services and hold meetings. Secondly, it has affected pastoral interaction where again, face to face has had to be replaced with phone or video calls.

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

**Answer:** Coming out of the pandemic has caused some people to stay away from the church due to fear from either having an illness or being elderly. In a positive way, it has widened the opportunity to reach more people through online activities.

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

**Answer:** I get emotional when watching films and on occasions I have shed the odd tear. When I am in the room with my family I do try and hide it as there would be a few laughs coming my ways!

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

**Answer:** Gaining a Foundation Degree with Church Army before being diagnosed with dyslexia. To have got through it gives me great pride after my diagnosis showed up a very clear weaknesses in processing.

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

**Answer:** For me one of the great things is that I will continue to lead the Blackpool Centre of Mission, where we have planted a church and have a focus on children and young people and we support the Deanery in mission with youth; as well as supporting youth and children's workers, which is all a part of the 2026 vision.

How would you express your own vision for the church?

**Answer:** My vision for the church is to be a community of people who worship God and serve him. A people who look up and look out.

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

**Answer:** I enjoy watching action films, walking and going to the gym.