

Media Questionnaire: Priests

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

Answer: Bryn Naylor; 37; Darwen, Lancashire

The church in Blackburn Diocese where you are serving:

Answer: Holy Trinity, Hoghton and All Saints, Higher Walton

Tell us about your family:

Answer: Married to Rhiannon with three children: Maxwell (6), Grace (4) and Ella (2)

If applicable, your former job before entering ministry?

Answer: Civil Servant. I moved moved down south to study languages at university. After graduating, I began a career in the Civil Service where I spent much of my time working as a translator and interpreter.

What led you to take the steps towards ordination?

Answer: I grew up around Christianity, but it only became real for me while attending a church in the US during a work secondment, where I became a Christian in 2012. I then had a niggling sense that God might want me to dedicate my life more fully to ministry in some way. I put it to one side for a while, but I couldn't quite shake it and eventually I shared it with the vicar of my church at the time, beginning a journey of discernment that led to a growing conviction that God was calling me to ordained ministry. I left the Civil Service in 2018 and moved to Durham to train at Cranmer Hall Theological College.

What's been the best thing about your training?

Answer: The best thing has been sharing this journey with others – with friends who are on the same journey, with friends who are not on that journey, and with my loving and supportive family.

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

Answer: As I've made the transition from academic study to curacy, training has continued to provide continuous opportunities to re-learn and re-experience the grace of God and go deeper in my own relationship with him – I'm constantly reminded of his faithfulness.

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: Things have improved over the past year but the pandemic has continued to determine how much of ministry is done. Despite this, the church has continued to be church: proclaiming the good news of Christ, sharing his love in word and deed with those in need.

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

Answer: It seems that there are still challenges in terms of both bringing people back into church who were there previously and encouraging those who are outside of church to come in, particularly those who remain anxious and fearful due to the pandemic. But after two years of increased isolation for many, there does seem to be a yearning for community which the church can seek to meet, which presents us with a real opportunity.

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

Answer: I speak four languages.

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

Answer: I still feel that juggling family life (with three children under five) at the same time as training for ministry and studying for a degree amid COVID-19 restrictions was an achievement, but it was only possible through God's grace and the incredible support of my wife and others around me.

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

Answer: I'm excited to be part of the Diocesan Vision to build healthy churches which transform communities, particularly discipling and equipping people to grow in their faith and nurture their gifts in order to be able to reach out to others with the gospel.

How would you express your own vision for the church?

Answer: My vision continues to be that the church is a place where people can encounter the love that God has for them by meeting with Jesus Christ, that it's a community where all can feel welcomed, loved and supported as they grow in their relationship with Him. My vision is also that the church is a community that serves and transforms its wider community by making God's love known in both word and action.

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

Answer: I've just started having piano lessons, keeping a long-standing promise to myself that I would learn to play the piano properly. I also like reading a variety of fiction, music, foreign languages, spending time with friends and family and sitting down with my wife to watch a good Netflix series.