

Media Questionnaire: Priests

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

Answer: Simon Griffiths, 39 years. Born and grew up in Rugby, Warwickshire.

The church in Blackburn Diocese where you are serving:

Answer: All Saints Preston

Tell us about your family:

Answer: I am married to Amy. We have three boys, Daniel, Nathan and Joseph (8, 7 and 5 respectively)

If applicable, your former job before entering ministry?

Answer: Solicitor

What led you to take the steps towards ordination?

Answer: Having become a Christian in my 20s, I became involved in different aspects of church life and increasingly took on teaching and leading responsibilities and opportunities. Over time, with the opportunity to explore these giftings, it became clear to me, with encouragement from those around me that my vocation lay not in practising law, but in ordained ministry. This is a conviction that only strengthened through the discernment process and training prior to ordination.

What's been the best thing about your training?

Answer: It's hard to narrow this down to a 'best thing'! Studying biblical languages has been a real delight – reading the scriptures in the original Greek and Hebrew requires you to slow down and dwell in the riches of God's word, seeing nuances of language and emphasis that really do impact on teaching and wider application in the church. I've also really enjoyed my first year of IME, with lots of opportunities to come together from different traditions within the Church of England, share experiences, and learn from one another, as well as gleaning lots of biblical, practical and ministerial wisdom from those speaking.

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

Answer: Fundamentally, the most important thing I have learned through my studies is a deeper love of the Lord Jesus, and a richer understanding of the grace and care of my heavenly Father. Time and again I have been struck by the centrality of a deep, resilient, personal faith, and how a desire to continue growing in godliness is foundational to a faithful, enduring ministry: we must always be recipients of God's grace in Christ, before we can seek to be instruments of his grace to others.

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: In the midst of many hardships, it has been a real encouragement over the past year to see the ways in which Christians have continually loved and encouraged one another and their neighbours, both individually in acts of kindness, and corporately in and through church meetings (often online) and creative ideas (such as

a letter-writing exchanges amongst church family members). It has also highlighted just how deeply inter-personal and relational we are, and how we truly need one another. In my first year of curacy, I've been particularly struck by the desire to maintain and grow a loving unity within our church family, that looks beyond itself to the needs of others around us.

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

Answer: We continue to see the challenges of ministry in a post-pandemic world in various ways. In relational deficits; in continuing nervousness and, in some cases, fear of meeting with others. Then there is the toll on mental well-being of so many. In lots of ways it feels like our worlds have shrunk, and I've noticed that, as a society, it seems that more than ever we are retreating into the supposed security of our homes and immediate families, rather than stepping out sacrificially and embracing community within the life of the church. However, many of these challenges also provide continuing opportunities for the gospel in a world that is confused, fearful, and desperately in need of hope, particularly as the prospect of war in Europe and the reality of evil is once again rearing its head. I'm encouraged to keep taking out the gospel – because it is only the gospel that offers true hope to those who feel hopeless, that promises life after death, in and through the Lord Jesus. We believe in a gospel that speaks of restored relationship, not just with one another, but with our Creator God, who graciously sustains and nourishes his people through every struggle. With technology too, churches are finding new opportunities to share the gospel with their community. My prayer is that in our deeper recognition of our frailty and dependence, as a church we will also be drawn into a deeper reliance on the Lord in prayer.

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

Answer: I once drove a rickety old van from London to Mongolia, via Central Asia!

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

Answer: A hard one to answer! I'm very thankful to the Lord for the many ways in which he has graciously provided for me throughout my life. Maybe we can say, becoming a husband and a father!

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

Answer: I look forward to furthering the Diocesan Vision at All Saints in discipleship, through teaching and pastoring others in the church, at all ages and stages, and equipping the whole church to love and serve the Lord and one another. I am also keen to reach out as a church and in my own life into the community with the good news, to bear witness in word and deed and particularly at the moment I have the opportunity to do that with international students at UCLAN, Preston. I'm also excited to be involved, in different ways, with our young people at All Saints, encouraging them to explore the gifts that the Lord has given them and discern his call on their own lives.

How would you express your own vision for the church?

Answer: My prayer is that through the power of God's Word and by the working of His Spirit, the church would be growing in the love and knowledge of the Lord Jesus – that it would be growing in unity together, and reflecting the glory and goodness of God to the world around it through the witness of the gospel in word and deed.

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

Answer: I love to go for long walks and enjoy cooking good food, and spending time with my family.