

## **Media Questionnaire: Alan Gault**

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

**Answer: 37, Carrickfergus, Northern Ireland**

The church and location in Blackburn Diocese where you are serving:

**Answer: St Luke's Blackburn, Bank Top.**

Tell us a bit about your family:

**Answer: Married to Beth for 9 years, we met in London. We have a 5 year-old daughter and by the time this is published we should have a newborn son. We also have a rescue dog called Mally.**

If applicable, what was your former job before entering ministry?

**Answer: I was a youth worker for 12 years before training for ordination, in Northern Ireland and then in 2 areas in London.**

Tell us something about your journey towards ordination?

**Answer: I had a sense of being called to some form of church leadership during my time at Queens University and the next decade was an exploration of what form that might look like while employed as a youth worker in various church contexts. It was during my time working in East London at an Assemblies of God (AoG) church that I first considered ordination with the Church of England. When I felt it was time to move on from the AoG church role, it felt right to look for a youth work position within the CofE to explore this further. The Lighthouse Church agreed to my entering the discernment process during my employment there and 18 months later I attended Bishop's Appointment Team hoping to study at Ridley Hall.**

What has been a) the most important thing you have learned and b) the most inspiring thing you have experienced during your training? (They can be different!)

**Answer: a) St Luke's is missionally focused towards young people and we frequently engage with young people with no previous church experience and also those who have had a negative experience with education.**

**Recently I have been reflecting on the value of engaging these young people on their terms and turf. A few attended the first week of an Alpha course that we were running, primarily targeted at adults. We attempted to create a youth group but it did not really work for the young people attending. Instead, we found roles for them to help serve the food, and then a couple of our team began hanging out with them in a space in the hallways where they congregated. They watched YouTube videos, chatted football,**

but in this less formal space the young people introduced questions about life and faith that led to some deep (though often brief) conversations. This has been way more effective for their spiritual curiosity than when we attempted to corral them into an 'organised group'.

b) At St Luke's we have been blessed to have a number of older women get behind our vision and wholeheartedly embrace the missional outlook of the church. Many of these women have been exceptionally faithful for many years and yet God has been working in their lives in really fresh ways over the last year. I had the privilege of baptising one of them this year as she wanted to mark and proclaim her faith in a way she hadn't ever before; despite being part of the church for over 50 years.

What are some of the personal challenges and opportunities you face in your ministry in the coming year?

**Answer:**

**Adapting to life with a new baby and as a family of 4 will be an experience for all of us. My MA dissertation is due at the end of August which feels very close with the pressures of completing it alongside the responsibilities of parish ministry and the demands of a new baby.**

What do you view as your most significant personal achievement? (This may be connected to your ordination training of course or it could be something else from another aspect of your life.)

**Answer: Achieving a First in my Theology Degree from the University of Cambridge.**

When he was announced recently as the next Bishop of Blackburn, Bishop Philip said: *"I am committed to continuing the growth of the church in Lancashire, helping to build joyful Christian communities. I would love to see the Church of England in Lancashire being an ever-stronger voice for justice, especially for the poorest. And I believe children and young people need to be at the very heart of all that we do."*

How would you seek to support the Bishop in fulfilling these aims?

**Answer: St Luke's is situated in one of the poorest parishes in the country and has a missional objective to reach out to children and young people. We are experimenting with what it means to centre deprived estate young people within our church family in the hope that we might be able to inspire and equip other churches to do the same. I am currently working on my Masters dissertation, exploring how preachers might be effective in speaking to and for emerging generations and I am hopeful that this will be of benefit to the Diocese.**

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

**Answer: I don't like potatoes that taste too potatoey.**

Finally, when you get the chance, what do you do you chill out and relax?

**Answer: I make time to exercise, and in the last year have really enjoyed running. I will watch most sports, but especially try and keep up with Manchester United matches and Formula 1.**