

Media Questionnaire: Kathryn Sperring

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

Answer: I'm 52 I grew up in Weston-Super-Mare and then Swansea where I did my teacher training and had my children. Finally, Garstang for 20 years

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

Answer: I am currently serving at St Thomas', Garstang and will be going to St John's Little Thornton for my curacy.

Tell us a bit about your family:

Answer: I live with my husband Trevor and we have three grown up children, Ed, Freddy and Peter. We have two cats and a mad dog called Toby!

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

Answer: I was a teacher and have taught all ages from pre-school to tertiary education. I have been a youth worker in church since before I can remember! Recently I worked in a Catholic primary school specialising in R.E and special needs.

Tell us something about your journey towards ordination?

Answer: My journey has been slow but I can see God's hand at work all the way through it. I remember writing in my journal about five years ago: 'I'm being changed and equipped but what for?'

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: The most inspiring thing is how wonderfully kind and generous people are especially when someone is in most need. I have learned that the breadth of the Church of England is vast and that God is at work in all of it; and I love it all too!

As parishes continue to recover following the trauma of the pandemic, please give us some insight into how your parish is moving forward at this time (you could reflect how people have adapted and changed in the way they 'do church', including online, as part of this response).

Answer: Covid has made our church even more compassionate. We have learnt a lot about serving our community and meeting those who are not traditionally found in church. We now run a food bank with 45 volunteers (from all over the community).

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

Answer: I am moving to a new place and getting to know a whole new congregation. I have been at St Thomas' and in Garstang for 20 years and am very much part of the community and the church. Building new relationships and learning everyone's names and hearing all their stories is my challenge.

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: I have set up a food bank and ran it during the pandemic and up until now. It has 35+ households using it (around 80-100 people). It has 45 volunteers from St Thomas', other churches, and the community. It is going to continue with a nine-person committee which is now very successfully continuing the provision. We run cookery sessions every holiday for food bank users and anyone else who wants to share their skills or learn to cook using ingredients you find at the food bank. This is hopefully being rolled out to other churches and we have funding for another set of equipment (£1,000).

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: see above! Also, I have been involved in starting up a new contemporary worship service at St Thomas' which reaches new families who have not attended church until now. This has been a steep learning curve but great fun.

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

Answer: I am doing couch to 5K at the moment.

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

Answer: I like to read novels, go out walking especially along the beach.