

Media Questionnaire: Matthew Rowley

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

Answer: Matthew Rowley, 48, 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 and location in Blackburn Diocese where you are serving:

Answer: The Trinity Parish, Curate in Charge of Hope Community Church, Grange Park.

Tell us a bit about your family:

Answer: I am married to Lucy who works at Vets4Pets and is training to be a nurse. I have three children, Emily 24, Isaac 19 and Daniel 11. I also have a grandson Harry who is 18 months old.

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

Answer: I have been full time in ministry serving with Church Army for 15 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.

Tell us something about your journey 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 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) Journeying with others and being a part of a wider community of people who follow Jesus and want to serve him. b) The most inspiring thing for me is hearing of newly formed churches in the diocese and hearing the story of God's work at hand through individuals have stepped out and had a go.

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: Over the last year we have been able to bring all our work back to face-to-face interaction with our activities and services. We have moved away from online services and study groups. I have been encouraged by the growth and the and community that is forming in the church.

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

Answer: Personal challenges come around maintaining a healthy work and rest balance in my life. Due to a health issue in November 2022, I have had to give more attention to the way I operate. I am confident that this event will make me more fruitful in my ministry. In ministry, it will be to work on the foundations in establishing Hope Community Church and growing the congregation and looking at ways of sustainability in an area of deprivation and poverty.

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: 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 very clear weaknesses in processing.

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: When I heard the announcement, I was very happy and pleased. Being called and ministering in a poor area and having a passion to reach young people myself, I feel that I sit with the same vision. With knowledge, understanding and passion for the poor I only feel that I will get the support I need on the ground.

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!

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



Answer: I enjoy watching action films, walking and going to the gym ... to mainly relax in the pool!