

Media Questionnaire: Peter Dillon

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

Answer: Born in Manchester on 23.09.1964, current age 58. Moved at birth into short term foster care, local authority recruited a long term placement under the banner 'Patrick wants a home for Christmas' (they were looking for a Roman Catholic family and found one), and I moved to Clayton le Moors.

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

Answer: The United benefice of St James' and St Stephen, Blackburn will be my associate curacy placement. My sending church is the United Benefice of Altham St James' and All Saints Clayton le Moors.

Tell us a bit about your family:

Answer: Married to Barbara for 36 years – a grown up son with three grandchildren and two other grandchildren that live with us following the death of our adult daughter at Christmas 2018. Fortunately, we've built our house on firm foundations a tricky few years, but never without God by my side.

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

Answer: I'm an experienced social care and health professional holding lots of frontline roles supporting people with complex and additional needs. Before moving into senior leadership positions I spent a number of years as Head of Strategic Commissioning in Blackburn with Darwen where I've strong links and connections before moving into senior leadership roles in the not-for-profit sector.

Tell us something about your journey towards ordination?

Answer: It's been a long one starting at secondary school leading me to the English College, Valladolid, Spain as a seminarian in 1983, leaving after a year to join the Marist Fathers (I went to St Mary's College on Shear Brow that was a Marist College). In a year out before joining their training programme I met Barbara and got married. I then spent a number of years attending church with Barbara and family as Anglicans; heard the call to ministry; joined the Church of England; spent 10 years as Church Warden and then realised it was time to really listen.

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) To live "incarnationally", to see God in all people and in all situations. Our God is a God of surprises and is found in the most unlikely of places and that takes discernment, prayer and an openness to being shaped and moulded. (b) That there is a wisdom in having an open and learning heart, actively engaging and listening to the

experience of others and different styles of worship etc and developing the skill to speak only when my words are better than my silence which has taken me into experiences and discussions that have added so much to who I am and becoming.

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: The pandemic did push us towards developing our online presence and we have a hybrid approach to active face to face worship and online access to principal services and compline six nights per week. From a refurbished kitchen, our "Warm Space" initiative has grown another unique space for social action, music and the opportunity to see what "Church is and can do".

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

Answer: To begin to learn alongside a new church community and leadership team and examine how the Church of England flourishes in a varied community from different cultural and faith roots. In many ways I'm going back into a community where I was taught and then went on to lead a broad range of health and social care teams.

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: Perhaps the trickiest question. Like all of us, my personal life hasn't always been straightforward but has been the space in which God has been working. On a professional level, I've been fortunate to work alongside exceptional people, whether paid staff or people who are vulnerable and require support. I've seen the best of people and as a senior leader in health and social care managed some very complex areas including safeguarding issues and situations that have been challenging. My faith has been fundamental to all of these situations with perhaps my most significant achievement being stopped by a colleague who enquiring why I dealt with the issues of life with good humour and humility said: "Peter, I think it's because you're a Christian."

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: Much of my life has been spent challenging structural and personal inequalities by building communities and through personal support to individuals on

the margins. I've been driven by the need to work from within communities, to acknowledge that we are all created in God's image and there's a real need to enable people to recognise this in themselves and support their growth and enablement. I'd seek to support the Bishop by taking forward through faith and prayer my personal and professional experiences and go ahead to find where the Holy Spirit is already at work and be that additional catalyst for growth.

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

Answer: I like the comedy and variety of the early 20s/30s and 40s with an eye for Brutalist architecture as well.

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

Answer: Time with my family, an annual excursion onto the canals with the chaps I went to school with and hanging out with Rufus, our 9 year old West Island not quite white Terrier.