

Media Questionnaire: Ryan Otley

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

Answer: Age 33. Born in Blackburn, grew up in Darwen

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

Answer: St Annes Parish Church, St Annes on Sea

Tell us a bit about your family:

Answer: My parents are May and Philip, who are both from Darwen, and I have a younger brother, Adam and an older sister Ashleigh. I also have 2 step-siblings, Charlotte and Darren and step-parents Alex and Gillian.

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

Answer: Before ministry I was a secondary school teacher who taught Computer Science and Business studies before moving to work in a pupil referral unit.

Tell us something about your journey towards ordination?

Answer: Since leaving university in 2012 and immersing myself back in my local parish church, members of the congregation and colleagues at work regularly kept asking if I had ever considered priesthood. My answer for many years was no, as I was happy teaching. As the years went on and I got more and more involved in parish life, my sense of calling got deeper and deeper until I could no longer ignore it and I had to answer it ... and now here I am.

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: Living alongside a Religious Community of Benedictine Monks and learning from their disciplined life of prayer and how to love and live in community with others as the Body of Christ. Also, getting to meet different people from different walks of life and traditions and of the church and being able to learn from them.

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: I think it has made the church re-assess what it is people need and how the church does pastoral care. I also think it has highlighted the importance of lay ministry and empowering them to go into the world to proclaim the Good News and support those in need.

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

Answer: Working in a busy parish with lots of support from both the congregation and my training incumbent there are many opportunities for me to explore different parts of ministry, from youth work to working with those who are vulnerable and in most need. The challenges will be harnessing my enthusiasm and focusing on one or two tasks and making them flourish rather than trying to do everything I want to do.

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: Being a constant positive influence on teenagers who I've worked with and managing to support them in extremely challenging times and giving them support to change their lives.

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: As a former secondary school teacher I hope to use the skills I have acquired over the years to grow the youth work in the parishes that I work in and for that to be a spring board for the youth to have a voice within our churches. Having grown up in a poor former mill town, I am extremely sympathetic towards social justice after experience deprivation first hand and hope to champion the needs of those less fortunate. I also aim to proclaim the catholic faith and get out amongst the people and live out the Gospel message with joy and hope.

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

Answer:

I once walked the three peaks in the Yorkshire Dales in 7.5 hours.

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

Answer: Walk, read, bake, cook and drink tea.