

Media Questionnaire: Tom Swallow

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

Answer: I am 25 years old, I grew up in Lindley in Huddersfield.

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

Answer: I am really excited that I will be moving to serve my Title Post at Blackpool Church St John's alongside the Rev. Andy Dykes. For the last two and a half years I have been based at St James' Church Lower Darwen, where I have been training whilst at Emmanuel Theological College.

Tell us a bit about your family:

Answer: I am newly married and my wife, Eloise, is currently working towards her MA in History. We have been friends since we met at church whilst studying for our undergraduate degrees in Lancaster.

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

Answer: I completed a degree in Chemical Engineering at Lancaster University before I started my training for ordination.

Tell us something about your journey towards ordination?

Answer: I began exploring my calling to ordination whilst studying for my engineering degree and began to discern God's calling me in a different direction to what I had planned. It was through serving in a homeless ministry in Lancaster I first felt God calling me to serve him as an ordained minister.

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) I have learned to grow friendships that bridge theological differences, to work with different people and to seek unity for the good of God's Kingdom.

b) I have loved experiencing the breadth and range of ways we can worship Jesus, which has in turn inspired my own prayer and worship to take different expressions.

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: In Darwen we have been growing our in-person youth ministry again since it was put on pause because of covid. We've also been seeking to work more closely with our local CofE school, to support our families better.

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

Answer: As I am recently married, working out what it looks like for me to do ministry as a married person balancing my family will be a different challenge but hopefully it will open up new doors, and opportunities for me too.

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: My most significant personal achievement is marrying my wife. But I'm also pretty proud of the fact I'm about to complete my theology degree as a dyslexic engineer who's never had to write an essay before.

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: I am looking forward to supporting the Bishop in whatever way I can towards these aims. Like the Bishop I would love to see the growth of joy-filled Christian communities. When serving my new curacy in Blackpool I'm really excited to create community amongst different generations, and across social divides, making sure everyone knows their place and value in God's family.

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

Answer: I used to work as a chef in a Mongolian stir fry restaurant.

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

Answer: I like cooking good food and love the chance to entertain some friends. I also like going for walks, playing a board game and watching a good film.