

Media questionnaire and brief biography: **Jenny Guilder**

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

Answer: Age 37, born in Bangladesh but spent most of my early childhood in Lancaster.

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

Answer: I am serving my curacy at Morecambe Parish Church (Holy Trinity, Poulton-le-Sands with St Laurence).

Tell us a bit about your family:

Answer: I've been happily married to Matt (vicar of St Cuthbert's church, Over Kellet) for 16 years and we have two pretty amazing children, Ben, who is 11, and Abi, who is 9.

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

Answer: Prior to starting ordination training, I had the joy of being a stay-at-home Mum, whilst fitting in some hairdressing around family life. Before that, I have worked as a Youth and Children's worker in various settings.

Tell us something about your journey towards ordination?

Answer: When someone first suggested I might explore the possibility of ordination training 17 years ago I nearly fell off my chair. Nothing could be further from the hopes and dreams I had for my life. However, God's ways are undoubtedly higher than my ways. His gentle, unwavering persistence has led me to where I am today.

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 for a: In the midst of changing circumstances, God offers a future that is absolutely certain. Jesus took on death and utterly defeated it - once and for all - so that every last one of us could be welcomed into his kingdom forever. The most important thing I have learnt during training is how to communicate this everlasting truth in effective and relevant ways.

Answer for b: The love, support and prayer that has been poured into me throughout training and in my curacy parish has been immense. People's unfailing commitment to seeing me flourish as I work out my place in the Church of England and, indeed, the Kingdom of God, has been utterly inspirational.

Since the pandemic many more parishes have also embraced online opportunities to engage with their local communities alongside their existing services. Please indicate ways in which you may have done this already or what plans you may have to explore ways to reach people in the 'digital space' in the future ...

Answer: As we slowly emerged from the pandemic, it became evident that some of the more senior folk within my placement parish had suffered physically, emotionally and spiritually. Combating this, our church worked hard to provide holistic care for our third age community. Every Thursday, guests can come to church for a fun chair-based exercise class, a short communion service and lunch together. In building this new congregation, it's been a joy to participate in what God is doing as He draws people to himself.

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

Answer: Whilst the most recent census results show our increasingly secular culture, 46.2% of the population still ticked the 'Christian' box. We know from other research that about 6% of the population are practicing Christians who read their Bible, go to church and pray regularly. These figures remind me that a large section of the population – another 40 % - are open to Jesus but not yet committed. I think those figures show an amazing openness for people to hear and receive the gospel today.

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: One of my most significant achievements has been teaching myself to walk (and run!) again after breaking my femur whilst running a marathon in 2019. However, I'm a million times prouder of the part I get to play in raising my children who are growing up to be two of the most creative, compassionate and fun people I know.

Bishop Philip has 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 will you seek to support the Bishop in fulfilling these aims?

Answer: These are great aims that Bishop Philip has set out for us as a diocese – aims that I wholeheartedly support. I'm looking forward to working alongside my training incumbent and the local church to prayerfully discern how we can achieve these aims in our context in Morecambe.

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

Answer: I am hugely competitive when it comes to board games - Monopoly is the worst for inducing tears in my competitors!

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

Answer: I love to spend time outdoors in God's creation. Relaxing for me might involve venturing up a mountain, paddling boarding in the sea or trail running through a forest.