

## Media questionnaire and brief biography: **Joe Houghton**

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

**Answer:**

I am 40 Years old and I am not a southerner but an easterner. I grew in Lowestoft which is the most easterly in the British Isles. The Anglican Church I worshipped in growing up was a two minute walk from the Ness Point, the most easterly point in British Isles. I loved growing up by the sea and summer holidays as a child were spent on the award-winning beach.

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

**Answer:**

St Christophers Lea, Preston

Tell us a bit about your family:

**Answer:**

I am married to Cathy, who is originally from Kendal, although we met in Sheffield. Cathy was a mature student studying occupational therapy and she began to attend and help with the youth work at the Church where I was employed as the Youth worker. The rest as they say is history. We have now been married for 11 years and have two children who are great fun called, Poppy who is 9 years old and a football mad son called Lenny who is 7 years old.

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

**Answer:**

Before exploring ordination, I was working as a School Chaplain at Archbishop Temple school in Preston. My role there was to pastorally care for staff and pupils, lead and facilitate worship and help the school live out its Christian values. I would open up the Chapel at breaktimes and lunchtimes and have about a tenth of the school come and join me to play games, hang out, receive teaching from God's word.

Tell us something about your journey towards ordination?

**Answer:**

I sensed a call toward Christian ministry from the age of about 16. My home church in Lowestoft asked me to do one of the talks at their children's holiday club. I felt completely inadequate but gave it a go. I loved studying the part of God's word I was going to teach and despite being nervous, enjoyed speaking about Jesus to lots of kids. From this moment on it was clear to others, taking more time to be clear to me, that God was calling me toward Christian and in the longer term ordained ministry.

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:**

The most important thing I have over my training has been the need to prioritise reading God's word and prayer coupled with making sure I care well for Cathy and the kids. Devotion to God, and to the people He's especially charged me with nurturing and serving. If these two aspects of life are rightly handled then ministry in the parish will be all the better for it.

**Answer for b:**

Much of my inspiration during training has come from a group of people who I have developed deep friendship with. Many of whom I am in a formation group with. The way these people pray, serve, worship and have dealt with incredibly difficult circumstances during training has inspired my faith and encouraged me toward faithfulness.

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:**

The digital space is not a neutral space and I believe part of the Church's role is to call people out from darkness and into the light, encouraging them to embrace what it means to be an embodied person made in the image of God and developing face to face relationships. Therefore, as a church we should only use digital spaces as means of advertising.

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

**Answer:**

I am undertaking a curacy-in-charge position so one of the biggest challenges has been to inhabit the extra responsibility with Christ-like servant heartedness. Meeting the lovely new Church family and seeking to love them well, pastorally caring for the congregation, building on all the good things going and seeking to reach out with the good news about Jesus to the community has certainly kept me busy. However, in all these things we've seen God opening doors for growth in me as I depend on God, growth in the Church family's faith, and new people coming to trust Jesus or returning to him after time away. These are exciting times to be a part of St Christophers.

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:**

Persuading Cathy to marry me even though she knew me really well has got to be up there! During my time as a school chaplain I pastorally cared for a number of children who were going through devastating personal circumstances and seeing them keep going, and still thrive in school, in small part to some of the input I gave, feels really significant.

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:**

My hope is that this vision might be part of what is going on and continues to develop in Lea. Vibrant and joyful Christian communities are formed when people who love Jesus do life together. I would love for St Christophers to grow into an even closer, yet welcoming, Church family who spend time together feeding on God’s word, eating communion and feasting on good food together at Church and in each other’s homes. The parish is large and there are many needs, my prayer is that we will discern together what God wants us to do to reach the poor in our community by meeting spiritual, physical and emotional needs. Finally, one of my great passions is working with children and young people and I would love to Church become accessible and enjoyable to all ages.

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

**Answer:**

When I was in my 20s I travelled around Europe dressed as Superman, to make a mockumentary of life as a retired superhero. I have always enjoyed dressing up and putting on accents as many at St Andrews will testify to if they have been at some of our all-age services! More recently I dressed up as a large orange filming around Preston, to tell the story of how an ordinary orange became a Christingle.

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

**Answer:**

I love sport, playing or watching. My son has caught the sport bug and so most weekends we play football, cricket, tennis or all three in the garden or at the park. We love watching films as a family and enjoy snuggling up with some popcorn. I also love walking up hills, kayaking, paddle boarding and camping. If I had a free day it would probably include a little bit of all the above with a chance to cook some nice food for the family as I fancy myself as a bit of Jamie Oliver.