

Media questionnaire and brief biography: **Peter Dillon**

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

Answer: 59 years old; grew up in Clayton le Moors where I still live.

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

Answer: The United Benefice of St Stephens and St James

Tell us a bit about your family:

Answer: I'm married to Barbara, it's our 36th wedding anniversary this year. We have a son Kieran who has three children and we have two other grandchildren who live with us as our daughter Kerrie died five years ago after a very brief illness. We work together to look to positive futures.

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

Answer: I've been a senior manager in local government, the NHS and a number of charities – responsible for a wide range of health and social care services across Lancashire and England. This was a rewarding and exciting career and I've taken a break to focus on where God wants me next as a Self-Supporting Minister. I'm currently working for York Diocese as their part-time interim Net Zero Carbon lead and enjoying placing the stewardship of God's creation at the heart of all we do.

Tell us something about your journey towards ordination?

Answer: My journey began over 40 years ago, I must be a slow learner!. When I was in my mid to late teens I felt God's call on my life and spent a couple of years training to be an RC priest. In a gap year I took a job at a local day centre – and met Barbara who I would go onto marry. Barbara introduced me to the Church of England and we supported our children through Church of England schools and I became more involved in the life of the church. Following a chance discussion I said that I'd be willing to be a churchwarden 'until you can find someone else who knows what they are doing'. Eleven years later they did!

During this time I became aware that my secular ministry in health and social care was meaningful; yet God was calling me to do more and I restarted my journey towards the priesthood. It's been hard at times, certainly sacrificial but a call to serve and point towards Jesus.

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: That God is here in the unlikeliest of places, people and life situations and that there's an art and discipline in discerning this through prayer, engagement and a living faith.

Answer for b: Aligned to above in many ways ... that Christ is found in our day-to-day encounters, nurturing, shaping and guiding. I continue to be inspired in my curacy in two churches where small and older congregations maintain faithful witness and commitment to the Gospel.

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: We livestream services at St James and are implementing digital opportunities at St Stephen's.

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

Answer: To move more fully into my role as curate and priest and balance out the challenges of being an SSM priest and my other roles including being my wife's primary carer. I think that latter role is a nudge from God for me to explore ministry to carers – one I'm going to explore.

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: A tricky one. I guess that I've been blessed by God's grace in many ways – I was raised in the care system and that brought many challenges not least building roots and identity. Much of my life has been underpinned by that image of Christ walking across the water and telling Peter to get out of the boat and fix my gaze on Him – and that has been the richness of my journey to date.

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: I am actively involved in the life of our local primary schools, particularly St Stephen's supporting engagement with our local Muslim communities through an active local Christian presence.

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

Answer: People are often surprised to find that I have Roman Catholic roots and spent some time training for the priesthood.

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

Answer: Family time and walking Rufus our feisty Westie!