

Media questionnaire and brief biography: **Sam Nicol**

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

Answer: 58 – Brindle

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

Answer: Brindle St James

Tell us a bit about your family:

Answer: I still have my mum, also sister Melanie and a niece Jodie and nephew in law Karl and their three children Tia, Gabby and Nylah and my twin nephews Arron and Morgan. All of whom I love dearly. I also have my chocolate labradoodle, Coco.

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

Answer: I worked for 25 years in the NHS and I currently work as the Director for Strategic Transformation in the Diocese of York.

Tell us something about your journey towards ordination?

Answer: I began attending church after getting married, and I stayed. Getting baptised and confirmed in 2001 and then spending the next 20 years resisting the call to ordained ministry. It was a long wrestle with God, who called me to run Sunday School, to read, pray and then preach until I finally filled in the forms to begin the discernment process, fairly sure in the knowledge that eventually someone at some point would tell me no! I am deeply delighted that hasn't happened yet. But the journey has been long and I have taken many paths.

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: God loves me, God loves us all just the same.

Answer for b: My brothers and sisters in Christ, parishioners, the students at Emmanuel, both my training incumbents (retired and current), all who follow Jesus.

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 have a Zoom chapel, that still meets on Sundays and Wednesday evenings, although attendance has reduced in the last year with people returning to attend in person. It is still used when people are poorly or for whatever reason are not able to get into the building to worship. We also have an active Facebook presence and the website is used to keep people up to date with activities.

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

Answer: The ongoing balancing act between a demanding paid role, to which I am also called and my parish ministry. But looking forward to taking on specific missional activities which have been presenting themselves, some of which I am already on with, but more to do. I want to use this first year of my curacy to continue to develop an outward look, as well as supporting the existing congregation.

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: To have weathered all the personal and professional changes and indeed upheavals that the last three years has brought.

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: During the discernment phase of my journey I went on placement to St James Over Darwen. It was during the pandemic and the foodbank was open on Saturday morning and there was a small act of worship on the street as part of this. It was the most amazing five weeks. Since then, Brindle St James has been supporting the foodbank in Over Darwen. Each week the donations/gifts brought to Brindle are ferried via a team of volunteer drivers to Over Darwen. It is a small act, but one filled with love. I would like to do more in this area, and I am with my Training Incumbent looking at other opportunities and ways that we can share our wealth with others.

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

Answer: I am a Neuro Linguistic Programme Master Practitioner.

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

Answer: I read detective stories and watch terrible telly, I am particularly fond of detective or police drama series or fictional crime, such as NCIS, or Death in Paradise, Blue Bloods. I walk the dog and spend time in the garden and I do enjoy a holiday in a warm clime. But the best thing is to spend a day with my family, particularly my little great nieces.