

Media questionnaire and brief biography: Tom Swallow

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

Answer:

I am 26 years old, I grew up in Lindley in Huddersfield.

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

Answer:

Since being ordained deacon, I have been serving my Title Post at Blackpool Church St John's in the centre of Blackpool alongside the Rev. Andy Dykes.

Tell us a bit about your family:

Answer:

I have been married for just over a year to my wife, Eloise. 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 for 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.

Answer for b: One of the highlights of my curacy year so far, has been preaching to more than 200 people at our Easter Sunday gathering before baptising some adults. Also, I have loved the privilege of leading a group in my house and me and my wife have become good friends and now Godparents to some of the group.

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:

Blackpool Church uploads all of its sermons to spotify for people to listen for the first time or again online. We also use Instagram to advertise our main events and Sunday gatherings.

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

Answer:

One opportunity and challenge will be continuing to support the growth of Blackpool Church by helping to offer more opportunities for discipleship and community for people of all ages.

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, trust me she's great! But I'm also pretty proud of the fact I completed my theology degree, particularly as a dyslexic engineer and I'd never written an essay before.

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 looking forward to supporting the Bishop in whatever way I can towards these aims. I like the Bishop would love to see the growth of joy-filled Christian communities. Whilst serving my new curacy in Blackpool I've been really excited to start a group for people of mixed ages 0-50 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.