

Media Questionnaire: Deacons

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

Answer: My name is Tristan Meares. I am 37 years old and grew up in the small village of Nuthurst (near Horsham) in West Sussex.

The church in Blackburn Diocese where you are serving:

Answer: St. Mary's Rufford and Holy Trinity Tarleton, serving alongside Fr. Mark Soady.

Tell us about your family:

Answer: I was born and brought up in Sussex, but my parents originally hailed from Derbyshire, and my maternal grandparents from Lincolnshire (where a number of my relatives still live). I have a twin brother, who is happily married with two children under the age of five – they also live in West Sussex, and I have been blessed to spend some quality time with my niece and nephew as they grow up.

If applicable, your former job before entering ministry?

Answer: I spent a very happy and fulfilling year as a Pastoral Assistant at St. Mary's Church, Somers Town (part of the Parish of Old St. Pancras, in North London). It was an excellent foretaste of ministry. During that time I assisted at services and community events, delivered a few sermons and school assemblies and threw myself whole-heartedly into the weekly round, working with all ages from the mums and tots group, the school choir, Messy Church and youth groups through to calling bingo for an over-60s group! All these activities and more, however, remained grounded in the rhythm of the daily offices of prayer and receiving Communion. The simple, joyful intimacy of being with Jesus at Benediction on Sunday evening was (from the start) a high point of my week and I was glad to make my first Pilgrimage to Walsingham with the parish, for by that point I was going with dear friends.

What led you to take the steps towards ordination?

Answer: Our Lord called me on Palm Sunday 2015 to serve Him and his people at the altar. I have been responding to His call since that time, trying to listen carefully to His guidance, and delighting in His loving mercy.

What's been the best thing about your training?

Answer: The combination of study and worship in community.

Can you say what is the most important thing you have learned during your training?

Answer: Have absolute faith and trust in Jesus Christ at all times; for in good times and bad, He is our strength and stay.

Reflecting on the difficult past year, please share a few thoughts about how the pandemic has impacted on ministry at this time (you could reflect how people have adapted to the circumstances in different ways as part of this response) ...

Answer: I hope that the pandemic has focused many minds on how church buildings are a public treasure and refuge; the hub of our worshipping lives as Christians and should not be casually locked against the faithful. It has been heartening over this time, nevertheless, to see acts of kindness to support others in need in the community; greater attention given to the role of the parish newsletter (or weekly email) as a vehicle for teaching the Gospel and, in one case, to see the Sunday School teachers publish online a daily activity for families with small children, such that affection grew for the Church during the many months of lockdown.

Meanwhile, what are some of your personal reflections on ministry in the post-pandemic period that lies ahead; the challenges and the opportunities?

Answer: I hope that the Church will overcome both the worldly dividing and undervaluing of peoples seen over the past few years standing out as a place of loving communion, where brother and sister come in equal dignity before God, and where the stranger is truly welcomed. I also think that the present time is an opportunity to recognise how much we have received from the God who loves us, how much He has already taught us and to humbly grow in our humanity by relearning His ways, so long ago taught us.

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

Answer: My brother's two adorable ginger cats (themselves brothers) have converted me from being exclusively a dog lover!

What do you view as your most significant personal achievement, before or during training?

Answer: Helping several dear friends in their times of need.

How do you hope to continue to support the Diocesan Vision 2026 at a parish level?

Answer: As a Deacon, through prayer and study, becoming steadily better able to share what I have received, to recognise and delight in the gifts of others (encouraging and teaching them along the way) and to live out my calling by word and example. By doing so I pray my ministry may be a blessing to the parish, both the churched and the unchurched. I look forward greatly to the opportunity to work with schools and youth groups, gently building up their knowledge and love of Jesus Christ.

How would you express your own vision for the church?

Answer: A Church that puts Christ at the centre of all hearts and lives and is transformed from within by her attention to scripture, prayer, sacraments and acts of loving service.

Finally, when you get the chance, how do you relax?

Answer: By reading and prayer; by means of a chance conversation at the right time. I also find that beautiful music or paintings or walks in the countryside open my senses to the goodness of God's Creation and remind me to thank Him with all my heart for His many blessings.