

Please fill in an answer to each question. Keep your answers fairly brief, ideally 2/3 sentences maximum. Please write answers directly into this file where indicated.

Your name, your age and your home village, town or city (where you grew up):

Answer: Tom Woolford, 33. I was brought up in a forces family – so come from everywhere and nowhere! I lived in Salisbury for my teenage years, Cambridge for most of my twenties, but became an adopted Northerner when living in Padiham (next to Burnley) for two years in 2011-2013.

The church in Blackburn Diocese where you are serving:

Answer: All Hallows' Bispham

Tell us about your family:

Answer: My wife (Julie) and I celebrated our 10th anniversary in March this year. God has blessed us with three daughters – Talitha Grace (5), Jessica Joy (3) and Hosanna Hope (1).

Our daughters' names are all connected to our Christian faith. 'Talitha' is Aramaic for 'little girl,' and when Jesus raises Jairus' daughter from the dead, he says to her 'Talitha koum!' ('Little girl, get up!') – Mark 5:41.

'Jessica' in its modern spelling was coined by Shakespeare in his play 'The Merchant of Venice,' but derives from the Hebrew name Yiskah, which means 'The LORD beholds' and was the name of Abraham's niece (Genesis 11:29).

'Hosanna' is also a Hebrew word which strictly means 'Please save us!' but became used also as a shout of praise. It was what the crowds yelled as Jesus rode in on a donkey to Jerusalem on what we now call Palm Sunday (e.g. Matthew 21:9).

Their middle names are all 'virtue names' – Grace, Joy, and Hope – which remind us (and, in time, our daughters) of what the Gospel really means. I'm keen to have a fourth and fifth daughter so that we can add Faith and Love to the collection – but my wife is currently proving hard to persuade!

Former job before entering ministry?:

Answer: I was in academia, completing a PhD in History at the University of Cambridge.

Why did you decide to get ordained?:

Answer: God has lain on my heart a strong desire to teach people the Gospel and pastor them in Jesus' name. I love both working with people and studying – and God has given me some gifts in these areas (though plenty of improvement still needed!).

What's been the best thing about your training?:

Answer: At College, I probably most enjoyed learning Hebrew so I can read the Old Testament in its original language. In my curacy so far, I have been pleasantly surprised by how meaningful and rewarding funeral ministry can be.

What's the most important thing you have learned so far?:

Answer: To study the Scriptures with humility – being prepared to have God disagree with me, and for me to adjust my beliefs and behaviour accordingly.

Can you name the most influential person in your Christian life to date and, briefly, say why?

Answer: I'll forever be grateful to my best man, Alex (now a software engineer living in Newcastle), who in my second year as an undergraduate in Cambridge took me to church, Christian Union, and read the Bible with me. I had a very vague and angst-and-doubt-ridden faith before I was exposed to those who believed and taught the Scriptures as the true and living word of God. Honourable mentions also to my mum, my wife and a couple of my vicars over the last dozen years – the late Mark Ashton, and Mark Jones.

What is your hope for your future role?:

Answer: In the long-term I hope to be able to combine parish ministry with teaching students and ordinands in some capacity. Maybe also the Liturgical Commission.

Name one thing about you people would be surprised about?:

Answer: I've memorised a few lists of facts for pub quiz purposes, such as every capital city of the world!

What would you say was your most significant personal achievement to date?

Answer: Marrying Julie! Also, completing that history PhD!

Favourite quote (from the Bible or elsewhere). Also state briefly why it is your favourite:

Answer: "The only person I should like to know thoroughly is myself; and I see no chance of that at present." – Lord Darlington, in Oscar Wilde's *Lady Windermere's Fan*. It amuses me because I often think some of my friends and family know me better than I know myself!

Unfulfilled ambition?:

Answer: Once upon a time I fancied myself as a bit of a musical theatre star in waiting, and did a few am-dram productions. But to be honest, my singing was (and is) merely OK - nothing special; and my acting was similar. I was hot on dancing though!



How do you personally hope to support the ongoing Diocesan Vision 2026 Healthy Churches Transforming Communities at parish level?

Answer: Our church is very busy with all sorts of things going on aimed at being witnesses, making disciples, and growing leaders. I've been getting involved in nearly all of them!

How would you express your own vision for the church?:

Answer: I hope and pray that the Church of England gets itself into shape for re-evangelising the nation. We're not in Christendom any more. To do so, I believe we need to return first of all to the faith and vision of the English Reformers.

How do you relax?:

Answer: I'm a member of Blackpool Cricket Club's Squash Club – I go there both to play squash with some new friends and to watch televised sport.