**Amy Bland**

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

**Answer:** Amy Bland, 24, Comberton which is a village just outside Cambridge

The church in Blackburn Diocese where you are serving:

**Answer:** Euxton Parish Church

Tell us about your family:

**Answer:** I’m single. My parents live in Comberton and I have a brother who lives in Norwich.

If applicable, your former job before entering ministry?:

**Answer:** I worked at a church in Blackpool called Freedom Church Mereside. I was taking part in the Blackpool Ministry Experience, which is part of the Ministry Experience Scheme, run by the Church of England.

What led you to take the steps towards ordination?:

**Answer:** The short answer is I think God told me to. The slightly longer answer is, after a few people had asked me if I’d ever thought about being a vicar, I decided that this was something I should pray about.

After a number of amazing answers to the things I’d been praying about, I felt like this was the direction God was calling me to go in. I then spent time finding out what vicars *actually* do, by spending some time shadowing priests, talking to people and then spending a year in Blackpool working full time in a church.

I realised that being a vicar combines many of the things I enjoy doing and the things I think God has given me gifts in. After having been reluctant to want to do this, I realised God knows me better than myself and has exciting plans ahead.

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

**Answer:** Living in community. During the first lockdown especially I was privileged to live with a group of people who would pray, eat, work and relax together. As we shared all the different part of our lives, the good and bad, we grew closer together and it taught me one ways Christian community can be lived out.

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

**Answer:** Although I knew this before, I’ve understood in a new way that everyone is made in the image of God and precious to him. This means that every person should be protected, be allowed to flourish and should feel safe and loved, both in the church and in wider society. This also means that each person has something to teach us about God, and their unique voice and story is important.

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:** People have really missed human contact, singing together and receiving the Eucharist. However, churches have also been great at supporting people in their community in new and continuing ways.

Churches have been impressive at adapting to changes in regulations and the creativity that churches have shown has encouraged me. Churches have also learnt new ways to make services accessible amongst the difficulties of using technologies.

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

**Answer:** It’s important to reflect how our church and local communities have changed. Communities change as new people come in and out, and so it will be important to reflect on what new gifts and opportunities there are at this point in time with the people in our communities.

It’s been amazing that new people have been exploring faith over the last year and they will be a gift to the church going forward, so this is an exciting opportunity and also a challenge.

One other opportunity is to reflect on the things we’ve learnt over the last year and to take them with us. For example, church has become much more accessible to some people – how can we build on that?

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

**Answer:** I play the steel pan, which is a tuned metal drum from Trinidad and Tobago.

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

**Answer:** Being called an ‘honorary northern lass’ by the church I worked at in Blackpool

Your favourite literary quote (it can be from the Bible or elsewhere) and, briefly, why?:

**Answer**: “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” Mark 1:17. When I first decided to start reading the Bible regularly, I started with the Gospel of Mark (because it’s short) and this verse really stood out to me. It reminds me that Jesus asks us to follow him but he’s the one who changes us as we follow him. He uses our stories, our uniqueness, and the things we are good and transforms them for his kingdom.

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

**Answer:** Part of the reason I applied to work in Blackpool was because I was inspired by the Diocesan vision. I am excited to bring my experience of working in new church communities, both in Blackpool and at a new housing development outside Cambridge, to the church Lancashire and now in Euxton in particular.

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

**Answer:** A place where people can meet together, feel safe and welcome and can explore who Jesus is, encounter his love and listen to what God is saying to them.

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

**Answer:** I love walking in the hills, camping and all kind of adventurous things. I also love naps!