**Christina Walker**

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

**Answer:** Christina Walker, 60, born in what was then West Germany and grew up moving around in the RAF, but from age 10-21 I was based in Edinburgh.

The church in Blackburn Diocese where you are serving:

**Answer:** The United Benefice of Dolphinholme, Quernmore and Over-Wyresdale

Tell us about your family:

**Answer:** I have been married to Tony for 39 years and we have 4 adult children and four grandchildren.

If applicable, your former job before entering ministry?:

**Answer:** I have been involved with children in a variety of capacities for 36 years, including 10 years as Children’s Minister at a former church while serving as a Reader.

What led you to take the steps towards ordination?:

**Answer:** Years of increasingly being prompted by others; our incumbent at the time moving on to a new job brought things to a head.

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

**Answer:** The opportunity to go deeper into areas I hadn’t really explored previously. Most of all, it has been the sharing of the training experience with others, particularly the opportunity to be inspired by each other’s stories, and reassured by our differences. I am so very grateful that the majority of the early training was unaffected by the pandemic.

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

**Answer:** I am still learning it: that the desire for ‘success’ and affirmation can become an idol and if I am centre stage then, by definition, God is not.

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:** The worst things are the lack of that social contact in just visiting people for a cuppa to get to know them or socialising at the end of a service – really hard when you are new. Harvest Festival was hard without singing, and family services not easy without being able to move around.

But singing outdoors at Christmas, even with the limitations, was great and may lead to new traditions. Preparing online services was time-consuming and sometimes frustrating, but it forced us to learn new skills. Other people’s contributions were great and sometimes very creative: our Forest Church team were amazing in preparing kits for collection and getting families joining in on Zoom. Hopefully, people who have contributed ‘up front’ to digital worship will be encouraged to stay involved and not step back.

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

**Answer:** There is a weariness around, and some folk have noticeably had their confidence knocked. It will take time and care to build things up. But we can put our new skills to good use – for all that we are ‘Zoomed-out’ at the moment, it offers many opportunities still to be explored. Some older parishioners have said they are aware of having missed out through not being able to access modern technology – I’m sure there is scope to get creative there.

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

**Answer:** As a child living for a time in Singapore, I had an encounter with what (I now realise) was a cobra whilst out playing … and I’m still here!

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

**Answer:** Raising my family.

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

**Answer:** Not exactly a literary quote, but an encouraging few words from Desmond Tutu for times when things seem overwhelming: “The only way to eat an elephant is one small piece at a time.”

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

**Answer:** I long to get fellow Christians to discover their own God stories, to share them with one another in a safe space, and to then feel encouraged to use them as part of sharing their faith more widely.

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

**Answer:** I think that we are often seen (rightly or wrongly) from the outside to be squabbling, polarised and self-interested. I am hopeful that we can learn, perhaps from the pastoral principles underpinning the Living in Love and Faith process, to learn how to listen to one another, have good conversations and be prepared to challenge our assumptions and fears, whichever point we begin from. If we can do this, it will be the beacon that the Christian church should be in a country which seems to be becoming increasingly polarised in so many respects.

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

**Answer:** A favourite way to unwind is by reading Catherine Fox’s Lindchester novels, which never fail to make me laugh. And Sunday night TV with my eldest son, in which I watch stuff I’d be pretty unlikely to choose for myself.