**David Hargreaves**

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

**Answer: David Hargreaves. 63 years. Foulridge, 150 yards from my sending Church of St Michael and All Angels and where I hope, after curacy, to return as Self Supporting Ministry Assistant Priest. It’s a very special place to me: a beautiful 1905 building: light and airy. Wherever I have gone in the world, it’s the church – people and building – to which I have felt myself called back.**

The church in Blackburn Diocese where you are serving:

**Answer: St Thomas’ Church in Barrowford and St Mary’s Church Newchurch-in-Pendle. I moved here at the end of June 2020, when I was originally due to be ordained Deacon, had it not been for Coronavirus. I was initially licensed as a Lay Worker, leading to much fun when trying to describe my role: was I ‘(nearly) the Curate’, ‘the (nearly) Curate’ or, what seemed to stick: “the Curate-in-waiting”! Since September I have been the ‘proper’ Curate, the first either Church has known within living memory. Whichever I was called, I could not have asked for a warmer welcome than I received from both church families.**

Tell us about your family:

**Answer: I’m single. The youngest – by a long way – of three children. My parents are both deceased: my father was the manager of the Yorkshire Bank in Colne. I do, however, have the most adorable dog in the world: Bramble, a Norfolk Terrier. Around the parishes people seem to know her at least as well as they know me!**

If applicable, your former job before entering ministry?:

**Answer: I joined the Army for 6 months as a ‘gap year’ job between school and university. I enjoyed it so much I ended up staying for 36 years, completing my service as a Brigadier in the Royal Corps of Signals. My job was to provide communications and computer systems pretty well anywhere in the world: UK, Germany, Bosnia, Iraq, Saudi Arabia to name but five places.**

What led you to take the steps towards ordination?:

**Answer: My faith has always been an important part of my life, right from my school days, and it undoubtedly sustained me throughout my military service. But when I retired 7 years ago, I never dreamt that God would start calling me towards ordination. But he did and, over time, the call became absolutely irresistible.**

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

**Answer: Meeting and getting to know so many amazing people: within the Diocese, on the staff of All Saints’ Centre for Mission and Ministry, my fellow students and, now, my fellow curates. The two years flew by and only now do I realise both how much I have learned and how much I have been changed and formed by the process.**

**You haven’t asked about the worst thing about the training, but that is almost implied by the question. That would have to be finishing our initial training and starting our curacy training under lockdown conditions. With only weeks to go before our culminating Easter School, everything was transferred on-line and that at a time when few of us had even heard of Zoom!**

**The tutors did a magnificent job delivering worthwhile training and worship over an 8-day period, but nothing could make up for the strangeness of it all and the lack of physical interaction.**

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

**Answer: That we all have a part to play in God’s plan; that we need to place ourselves in His hands and allow Him to work through us; and that nothing we have done nor any experience we have gained is ever wasted in His hands. Also, that God’s Will will be done in His own way and in His own time.**

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 have already explained some of the impact Coronavirus has had on me personally. But more widely it was heart-warming to arrive in two parishes just as they started to emerge from the worst of Lockdown 1.**

**My first Sunday was also the first day either church had been open for private prayer in over 4 months, making it incredibly special; my next Sunday we held our first services and the following week our first Communions. There was therefore a palpable sense (after all the suffering and sacrifice that everyone had gone through) of a re-awakening and blossoming.**

**But equally, there was also a sense of the fragility of it all, emphasised by both the differences that were apparent to all and by the setbacks along the way. I have learnt that we need to make the most of every opportunity we are offered as and when it is offered to us. Even in adversity – perhaps especially in adversity – there are things we can use to spread the Good News of God’s love.**

**And I’m really looking forward to seeing what our parishioners look like – not just their eyes or their picture on Zoom!**

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

**Answer: We have learnt so much over the last 12 months about how to communicate God’s message and how to make the best use of technology to spread the Word to places we haven’t previously reached. We must ensure that we continue to exploit these new opportunities, whilst not neglecting our more traditional approaches and remembering that we only have a finite number of people and hours in the day. We need to ensure that the ‘new normal’ embraces the best of what we have experienced and do not lazily revert to the ‘old normal; whatever that was.**

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

**Answer: I’m very strongly introverted, despite all outward appearances to the contrary! (It probably helps that one of my hobbies is amateur dramatics.)**

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

**Answer: Rising from my childhood in a terraced house to become the first person in my family to go to university was pretty special. But I suppose the most significant achievement for me as a person was the first time, as a Samaritan, someone decided after talking to me that they weren’t going to commit suicide, but instead decided to give life another go.**

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

**Answer: This is a toss-up between verse 10 of Psalm 46: “Be still and know that I am God” (a personal mantra during a difficult operational tour) and the closing lines of Cecil Spring Rice’s poem *Urbs Dei*: “And soul by soul and silently her shining bounds increase, And her ways are ways of gentleness and all her paths are peace”.**

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

**Answer: Whatever God calls me to do! I hope that doesn’t sound glib, but if the last few months have taught us anything it is that trying to make my own plan, rather than listening to the Lord, is a really good way to give Him a chuckle.**

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

**Answer: A beacon in a dark world, lighting the way to God’s eternal Kingdom.**

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

**Answer: Sing, act, go to the opera and theatre and run around a wood with a map in my hand – but not necessarily all at the same time or in that order! All of which have been remarkably difficult to do during lockdown conditions, although on-line choirs have helped!**