**Mark Wooding**

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

**Answer: Mark Wooding, 28, Blackpool**

The church in Blackburn Diocese where you are serving:

**Answer: St John’s Leyland**

Tell us about your family:

**Answer: Married to Jade and we have two daughters, Leah (3) and Charlotte (1).**

If applicable, your former job before entering ministry?:

**Answer: Ministry Assistant**

What led you to take the steps towards ordination?:

**Answer: A sense of calling to serve the Lord and his church. A desire to share the gospel with people that need to hear it and to bring those who do believe to a maturity in Christ. To serve in God’s mission to his glory.**

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

**Answer: My learning more about God (Theology, Doctrine, Church History, Biblical studies etc…) leading to joyful praise! The more knowledge I have gained the more I am humbled and my dependence on, and love for, God has deepened.**

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

**Answer: Perhaps the most important thing about my training is how it has given me the skills I need to keep learning and growing in my future ministry. Good habits of prayer and reflection have been built in which will sustain me in my ministry. But above all knowing that my value is not in my academic achievements, but in Christ.**

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 pandemic has had a huge effect huge impact on relationships within the church as a family, especially not being able to meet together to encourage and build each other up. Lots of churches have become efficient at ‘doing church virtually’ and adjusting things into a new format in an engaging way. It has also caused lots of church members to think in new creative ways for evangelism and pastoral care.**

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

**Answer: After such a sustained time of ‘virtual church’ I fear that there will be those who have enjoyed it so much that they would rather continue in that manner than physically returning to our church buildings to worship together. We will need to show why it is so good to meet together; even if it’s not as convenient or fancy for some.**

**A positive to not meeting in our physical churches is that it has shown that the church is the people not the buildings. It will be an opportunity, as we come back to our buildings, to continue that thinking and encourage people to think about the importance of spiritual things over material things. The building of relationships, both vertical and horizontal, as a priority in how we can use our buildings going forward.**

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

**Answer: I play the ukulele! I haven’t had it out for a while though; with two small children there is no time to practice, and it is too noisy to play after they have gone to bed.**

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

**Answer: Dealing with the day-to-day challenges of theological training and potty training at the same time! Both of those things would have been challenging on their own; so to do them at the same time I feel has been an achievement.**

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

**Answer: Ephesians 2:8. ‘For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God.’**

**The whole section of Ephesians 2:1-10 is a favourite of mine as it shows God’s immense kindness to undeserving sinners that he offers us salvation through his son as a free gift. Amazing!**

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

**Answer: Keeping Christ at the centre of all things so that he is the aim and goal of all we do. Simply keeping a love for Jesus at the centre will naturally mean being a witness to him and wanting to enable the ministry of others so that more people can come to a saving knowledge of him. Seeking to promote Christ in all of life whilst being rooted in prayer for his church that in his strength we may be his body on earth effectively for his glory.**

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

**Answer: God’s people meeting for worship and sharing their lives together (Acts 2:42-47) growing in maturity (Eph. 4:15) that leads to good works (Eph. 2:10) and the spreading of the gospel (Matt. 28:18-20).**

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

**Answer: I like to perform magic tricks! If I have any time for it, I like to learn new tricks and come up with my own effects. – I had to find something quieter than the ukulele!**