

My experience on Blackpool Ministry Experience Scheme: Article by Josh Harrison



Josh is 18 and from Preesall. He is just out of college and is exploring a call to ordained ministry.

Why am I on the Blackpool Ministry Experience Scheme?

I'm on the Scheme because I wanted to explore my calling towards ordained ministry. During college, where I was studying ICT, I found that my calling towards ordained ministry was becoming stronger.

I think that this may have been due to the very secular and diverse world that ICT is today. One of my biggest mental struggles with realising my calling was which part of ministry, do I feel called to?

Another big question was: is it really for me? During my time on the Church of England Youth Council, I've regularly been in contact with many different people that have been on similar schemes; some confirmed their callings and for others, they pointed them in the right direction.

On the way home from a Diocesan Youth Council set-up meeting last January, a very good friend said: "there's this scheme in Blackpool; a gap year and you basically shadow a vicar." My friend knew very little about the fact that I feel called towards ordained ministry and had been exploring it for years.

I'd never seen the Blackpool Ministry Experience Scheme before so knew it was new and I had doubts about doing something that was new, but God moved me to click 'send' on the email, and so that's why I'm here.

What have I done so far?

So far I've been involved in SO many different things that I can't even remember some of them! One of the best things so far has been Clergy Chapter. This is a group for mainly clergy (However there are some lay people such as Church Army evangelists) and it's basically a support group for them.

Some of the other things that I have been up to are: attending Deanery Synod; a drop-in (helping those in need); helping to open church to the public; the Routes of Faith course; hospital chaplaincy (from birth to end of life) and finally, one of the best experiences for me has been offering occasional reflections on the Bible.

Given I am currently 18 and can't legally even be a church warden yet, I thought that I wouldn't always be listened to, but how wrong I was. Both Holy Trinity and St. Peter's have truly embraced 1 Timothy 4v12

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How have I found it so far?

So far, I have managed to kindle new friendships, links and much more. One of the best things is that at both of my current churches have diverse congregations.

Coming from a church where I was one of just 3 in the 0-25 age band and the rest of the 65 strong congregation were over 70, Blackpool is quite a different place.

For a start, there are young people in both churches and not just token youth. They question and have an active part in the service.

Both churches are open to new concepts and alternative ideas, and are not as interested in statements like 'that's the way we've always done it' but are more interested in statements like 'we can do this to help'.

What are you hoping to go onto and why?

I'm hoping to further explore ordination through the Bishop's Advisory Panel (BAP) process. Whilst I had been considering my calling for some years, this year has triggered different thoughts and conversations; all of which affirmed my calling. I've never been discouraged in any part of my work.

What would I say to an applicant?

Why are you asking me and why have you not applied yet?! If you think that you're called to do something for God's benefit in any way, then what better way of seeing if it's for you than to test it?