

Name: Joseph Harvey

Age: 32

Original Home Village, Town or City: Portsmouth

The Church in Blackburn Diocese where you are serving: Christchurch

Church Address: Christchurch Blackburn, Mosley Street
Blackburn, Lancashire, BB2 3ST

If applicable, what was your former job before entering ministry? Teacher

Tell us something about your journey towards ordination?

I was ordained while living and serving in the Anglican Diocese of Egypt. Working with the Church Mission Society in a small town in the Nile Delta, our local Anglican congregation was without a pastor. My wife and I felt passionately for the church, and longed to revitalise the church community. The Diocesan Bishop encouraged me to consider ordination as part of our call to serve the church in Egypt; a call I had first felt from The Lord whilst at university but had put to the back of my mind as I pursued overseas mission. This began a journey of education, both formal and informal as I began leading the church as a Lay Minister before being ordained Deacon and then Priest in the Anglican Province of Alexandria.

What has been a) the most important thing you have learned and b) the most inspiring thing you have experienced during your training? (They can be different!)

Answer for A:

My training was very much 'on the job' as I was thrown straight into leading our church community. In our context particularly, I learned a lot about the importance of relationship within a leadership context. Leading in an ecumenically and theologically diverse church, I learned that it was peoples sense of involvement, belonging and felt sense of value that led to peoples investment and partnership with the vision of our community. These factors, all driven by relationship, enabled our community to look past differences and work towards a common goal.

Answer for B:

In Egypt I had the joy of working with and working alongside indigenous Christians and secret believers. Their faith, under often incredibly testing and difficult circumstances, was particularly inspiring to me.

What are some of the personal challenges and opportunities you face in your ministry in the coming year?

Getting to grips with UK culture! Having lived out of the UK for over 8 years, in both Jordan and Egypt we are aware that we settle back to a different country than the one we left with conversations around social issues particularly having moved on significantly. Learning to do ministry in this new context is going to bring challenge, but also opportunity as we listen and learn.

Many more parishes have embraced online opportunities to engage with their local communities alongside their existing services; especially since the pandemic. Please indicate ways in which you may have done this already or what plans you may have to explore ways to reach people in the 'digital space' in the future:

I am passionate about the importance of believers gathering together in person to worship God and that there is power and significance when we do this. I am keen to engage with younger generations and bring them into church and know that the digital space is such a key to inviting and engaging young people as well as helping to grow their sense of belonging within church.

Bishop Philip has said: "I am committed to continuing the growth of the church in Lancashire, helping to build joyful Christian communities. I would love to see the Church of England in Lancashire being an ever-stronger voice for justice, especially for the poorest. And I believe children and young people need to be at the very heart of all that we do."

How will you seek to support the Bishop in fulfilling these aims?

The church we led in Egypt was full of families with young children. One of our goals was to make sure the children felt that church was for them every bit as much as the grown ups. As Bishop Phillip speaks of children being at the very heart of what we do, I am passionate about seeking to help the church be a place where children feel at home, valued and respected. As children grow up in a church that preaches the Gospel, and is full of the presence of God, I believe a generation will naturally arise that seeks to see justice realised in our communities. We already hear much about the current younger generations being 'activists' and 'justice orientated' and I am passionate about helping young people see how these are not only compatible with a relationship with God but in fact driven and inspired by it.

What do you view as your most significant personal achievement? (This may be connected to your ordination training of course or it could be something else from another aspect of your life.)

I do consider leading and growing our church in Egypt to be my most significant achievement. Leading an Arabic speaking congregation, in a culture different to my own was an immense challenge. While I am sure I did many things wrong, (and am certain I said many things wrong linguistically), I am proud of pushing through the cultural awkwardness, the sense of not being 'the right person' to do what I felt God was calling me to at that particular time. God was incredibly faithful, and I certainly was not doing it alone!

Tell us about your family/ loved ones:

I am married to the wonderful Sarah, who I met while studying at Oxford Brookes University. Since engagement we have been passionate about doing ministry together, and it was this that led us to living in Jordan where our eldest son Zane (8) was born, closely followed by Elora (6 - our only child born in the UK!), and then Melody (4) and Esther (3) who were both born in the land of the Pharaohs.

What do you do to chill out and relax?

I have always been interested in sport, and am a avid follower of both cricket and football - playing both whenever I get the chance! I also enjoy reading, and music and play the guitar and the bass guitar. As a family we love to get outdoors, walking and exploring the countryside. Sarah and I love finding a good coffee shop together.

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

People are often surprised to find out that I used to play bass in a metal-core band (thats a form of Heavy Metal for the uneducated).