

Name: Sara Marriott

Age: 52

Original Home Village, Town or City: Accrington

The Church in Blackburn Diocese where you are serving: Immanuel Feniscowles and St Francis Fenisccliffe

Church Address: Immanuel Church
Feniscowles, Blackburn, BB2 5EW

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

Tell us something about your journey towards ordination?

I started my journey towards ordination without a clear sense of God's call on my life; instead I put my trust in the wisdom and encouragement of the clergy and friends from my sending church, who were well ahead of the curve, so to speak. It has taken me quite some time to be able to discern and feel confident in my journey towards ordained ministry. I believe the turning point came when after failing to pronounce the word 'licentiousness' multiple times whilst reading one Sunday, a member of the congregation came up to me and said 'you being you, allows us to be us'. It was then that I realised that God loved me and had called me as me, mistakes and all, to minister to his people and demonstrate that God also loves them and has a plan for them too. My journey towards ordination has been the most challenging and yet the most fulfilling time of my life.

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:

The most important thing I have learned is that for me this has not solely been about ordination. Over the past three years I have learned that God loves me, that I have found a way to love myself and that other people love me too. I have also increased my capacity to show the agape love that Christ demonstrated.

Answer for B:

The most inspiring thing I have experienced was the Sacramental Theology and Ministry module undertaken this year at college. Developing a more thorough understanding of the theology behind the actions has brought about a much more physical and spiritual experience for me at the table when I meet with Christ. I am passionate about sharing this with others so they can experience it too.

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

The biggest challenge for me going forward will be maintaining a healthy work/life/church balance. I will be reducing my working week from four days to three to ensure that I can fulfil my curacy commitments and still have a sabbath. I have strict boundaries around the regular activities which allow me to maintain my physical and mental wellbeing.

I am looking forward to experiencing 'church' in a new context and being able to journey alongside a newly

united benefice as they begin a new life together. I will be keen to strengthen bonds within the two churches and the local community.

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:

In my sending parish, during the pandemic, I set up a 'Chatty Church' What's App group in order to keep people connected, to share news and create a dedicated prayer space. This is still continuing today. In my placement context, we have been experimenting with online bible studies which have proved popular with people who find it difficult to leave their houses, especially in an evening.

Going forward I would like to see the digital space used more extensively. For example an online prayer wall on the church website; digital newsletters; podcasts and community discussion forums.

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?

I am very proud of my Lancashire roots and firmly believe that God is calling me to participate in his mission here. My life experience equips me to engage and connect with people of various ages and backgrounds. For the past 16 years I have worked in a secondary school with students from some of the most deprived areas in the country and this has given me a thorough insight into some of the challenges faced by Lancashire families. In some cases, I myself have a shared experience so can minister from a place of understanding. I will strive to create meaningful, intergenerational worship experiences, where everyone can meet with Christ and encouraging a sense that everyone is included in God's plan. I know that God loves to hear the voices of the marginalised and will seek to promote those voices (of adults and young people alike) through creating space for conversation, Christ centred initiatives, and pastoral care.

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.)

My most significant personal achievement is being able to work full time, complete an academic theology course, attend residential study weekends, regularly preach and lead worship at two churches, and still be a wife, sister, fun aunt, and friend without completely losing my mind. God is good!

Tell us about your family/ loved ones:

I am married to Adam whom I met at college when I was 18. God has not blessed us with children but we have many nieces, nephews and great nieces and great nephews to keep us very busy.

What do you do to chill out and relax?

To relax, I do like a nap. Adam and I are proud owners of Glenda, our motorhome, and we do like travelling around the country in her. We love to spend a lot of time outside in nature, whether that is bird watching, hiking, kayaking or generally mooching about until we find a café!

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

I am the original member of the Fairfield Women's Boxing Club, which I attend every Wednesday. This is a vitally important part of my Rule of Life. I am quite happy to beat up a bag and participate in some light body sparring. However I will never competitively box because I have no desire to hit someone in the head and even less desire to be hit myself.