

## Rev Sam Sheppard

Some people call me Rev or Vic or Father but I prefer Sam (because it's my name).

I'm 29 and I'm priest in charge of Whitchurch and Hengrove in South Bristol.

I became a Christian when I was a teenager, in an anglo catholic church, and pretty early on I felt I was being called to be ordained. I had my first meeting with the DDO when I was 18.

Whilst I always had the support of my priest and my amazing church everybody kind of knew it was a long shot. I was young, too young I was told quite often.

I'm from a working class family. I wasn't well spoken or well educated, I had no prospects of going to university and perhaps my biggest challenge: I'm not churchy enough. I was never sucked in to that christian subculture that infects so many of our church's, I wasn't the sort of person that got ordained. They were looking for neat shiny church people finishing university, not rough round the edges council estate kids who didn't have the a levels for university.

At every stage I was told that I wouldn't make it through to the next but I always did until eventually being recommended for training at what was then called a Bishops Advisory Panel. I began my ordination training at Ripon College Cuddesdon when I was 21, was ordained deacon at 24, and after completing my curacy at St Barnabas Knowle West was licensed as priest in charge (or vicar as most people call me, guy who runs the church).

What I'd say to anyone who thinks that they may be being called to ordination is that it won't be easy. It will at times be hard, and painful. You will have to make sacrifices.

This life is often demanding and it's often challenging.

But if it is what God is calling you to it is so, so worth it. To know that I am doing what God made me to do, to know that I am becoming the person God created me to be.

And to have the privilege to live in this parish and serve these people God has made is the a huge honour and pleasure, and I wouldn't trade it for the world.

At the end of the day I couldn't do anything else even if I wanted to, because being a priest isn't what I do, it's who I am.