



Richard Coles

**Cleric, Broadcaster, [Author](#) and former
Communard**

Reverend Richard Coles is a Church of England parish priest and co-presents BBC Radio 4's Saturday Live. He presented two series of BBC One's The Big Painting Challenge and is a regular contributor to television and radio. He is also a prolific writer and regularly engages with his near-400k followers on Twitter.

Richard's biography

Richard Coles' background

The Reverend Richard Coles is a Church of England priest in the quintessentially English village of Finedon, Northamptonshire, where two of his ancestors were Vicars in the seventeenth century. However, in complete contrast, more than a quarter of a century ago Richard was the instrumentalist half of pop band the Communards, together with Jimmy Somerville.

During the 1980s The Communards had three UK Top 10 hits, including Never Can Say Goodbye and the biggest-selling single of 1986, Don't Leave Me This Way. This, therefore, affords him the unique position of being the world's only vicar to have had a No.1 hit record.

Since 2011, Richard has been a co-presenter of BBC Radio 4's Saturday Live and is also a regular contributor to 'Pause for Thought' on the Radio 2 Breakfast Show. He is a frequent guest panellist on shows such as Have I Got News For You, Would I Lie To You? and QI.

Often described as Britain's most famous vicar, Richard was the inspiration for the main character in the BBC hit comedy Rev, a programme for which he also served as consultant.

In 2017, Richard was a contestant on the BBC's BAFTA-winning prime-time show Strictly Come Dancing, and the year previous he was a semi-finalist on [Celebrity](#) Masterchef. He has a keen interest in classical music, art and ceramics, and co-hosted the BBC's Big Painting Challenge alongside Mariella Frostrup in 2017 and 2018.

Richard Coles grew up in Northamptonshire and attended a minor public school where he was a chorister and, to his horror, realised he was gay. As a young adult he subsequently moved to London to work as a session musician in theatre. In 1983 he joined pop group Bronski Beat as a sax player where he met Jimmy Somerville. The following year, Jimmy and Richard left to form the Communards. success came fast and they had the UK's biggest-selling single of 1986, but Richard was not at ease with the sudden fame. He was the gawky, bespectacled, musically trained geek who physically towered

over the extrovert Somerville, but was otherwise lost in his friend's shadow. Friction grew, and it was against this backdrop of drug-fuelled arguments that Richard invented a deception which ultimately drove him away from his career in pop music and towards a more fulfilling vocation to God.

In 1990, after attending a mass at St Alban's, Richard Coles was suddenly inspired with a new found faith. He took a theology degree at King's College, London, before returning to Northamptonshire where he began to seriously consider taking holy orders. After ten years as a Roman Catholic he reverted to Anglicanism, and in 2005 Richard was ordained into the Anglican priesthood.

Since 2011, Richard has been on the board of Wellingborough Homes, a social enterprise that provides housing and community support for the Borough of Wellingborough. In 2012, he was awarded an honorary doctorate by the University of Northampton and is a Fellow in the Royal Society of [Arts](#).

In 2017, he was elected a Fellow of King's College London and Chancellor of the University of Northampton. In 2019, he was appointed Honorary Chaplain to the Worshipful Company of Leathersellers.

As an [author](#), Reverend Richard Coles has written five books including three memoirs; the best selling *Fathomless Riches: Or How I Went From Pop to Pulpits* (2014), *Bringing in The Sheaves: Wheat and Chaff from My Years as a Priest* (2016) and Sunday Times bestseller *The Madness of Grief* (2021), all published by Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

His work as a broadcaster, priest and formative years in the music industry make Richard a delightfully entertaining, articulate and very funny [after dinner speaker](#); recalling many extraordinary and humorous anecdotes of his journey from pop star to priest.

He is also regularly in demand to host corporate and industry award dinners and delivers keynote speeches on topics such as trust, ethics, mental health, [corporate social responsibility](#), diversity & inclusion and LGBTQ+.

Richard's talks

- **After Dinner Speaker – “From Pop Star To Parson”**

Having addressed audiences as diverse as local Government Ministers in Marlow and world-renown practitioners of the British Medical Association, to international travel agents in Abu Dhabi and an association of car fleet managers, Richard has refined a highly original, humorous and captivating after-dinner speech that will appeal to all audiences.

There aren't many Church of England priests that can claim to have had a British Number 1 hit single... in fact, to-date, the Reverend Richard Coles is the one and only, as part of the highly successful pop duo the Communards.

In his popular after-dinner speech, From Pop Star To Parson, Richard Coles tells a story that is as real as it is unlikely.

He connects the euphoria and mayhem of being 'Top of The Pops' in the 80s — which resonates with audiences of that era — to his present circumstances as Church of England priest, radio [broadcaster](#), television presenter and author — which resonates with all sorts of people — and enables him to reach a wide audience, answering amongst many burning questions, “How do you go from pop star to priest? And why?”

- **Life of a Thoroughly Modern Parson**

- **Adventures and Misadventures in Dance**

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