

Statement seeking support for election to General Synod

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Who am I?

A churchwarden and organist at St Andrews, I have lived with my family in Rutland for over 30 years. I serve on both Deanery and Diocesan synods and from my time as a lay mentor in Bishop Donald's ministerial review programme, I had the pleasure to work with clergy in churches across the diocese gaining appreciation and understanding of the opportunities, challenges and issues facing churches in their local communities be they urban or rural based; of long standing or nurture and planting in areas of mission and development.

As a student, I lived and studied at the former Nene College in Northampton, worshipping in Kingsthorpe and then Emmanuel, Weston Favell. Raised in a Christian family, my faith has always been fundamental to my identity and values. It was whilst at Nene, that I truly discovered the power of a new and maturing relationship with Jesus Christ that to this day, I am unashamedly, still learning, processing and understanding!

Along the way, my spiritual homes have ranged from Cathedral communities (Chelmsford and Coventry); urban and town areas (Walsall, West Midlands); Methodist and Local Ecumenical Partnerships (Wokingham, Berkshire) until relocating to rural Rutland. In each setting, I have witnessed the underpinning love of Christ as each community wrestles with the challenges and issues that impact their identity, purpose and mission in the local context.

Why am I standing for election to Synod?

I am fortunate enough to have taken early retirement and now able to commit time and energy to the work of Synod that quite simply was not a practical option during my working life. Importantly, I remain curious, willing to learn and willing to share recognising that many on Synod will have deep seated knowledge, expertise, interest and opinion on specific facets and topics facing the Church. I respect that depth of expertise and Synod is enriched by those contributions. My offering is one of breadth; a variety of experience and a lifelong belief that opportunities and challenges should always be considered holistically and in context. With the many challenges facing Church and Society, both breadth and depth are fundamental attributes of discernment for Synod to function effectively.

With 21 years working in Chief Executive roles, organisational transformation and resilience together with breadth of vision, purpose, scrutiny and understanding has stood alongside the detailed and specialised knowledge of colleagues. I believe such balance is essential if laity are to be a truly effective and representative voice on Synod.

What are the issues that are important to me?

I am standing for election as a generalist with no single agenda or factional interest to promote or defend. I do wish to ensure to the best of my ability that the silent voice of a majority is not lost in discussion or debate by a vocal, however well-informed minority.....on any topic.

❖ **Open to all.**

Unequivocal and unashamedly, but acutely aware of the pain and hurt felt by many across a wide spectrum of informed opinion. Respectful acceptance of time for reflection and prayerful contemplation must also be read in the context of time for action. I recognise the impact and consequences for us all and commit to work diligently to better understand the anguish felt by so many.

❖ **Communications for all**

Through my optics, I am not convinced that the communication channels via synods of all levels are sufficiently well executed to Parish level. Our rapidly changing world is increasingly dealing with both disruptive and incremental change and we are quite frankly, less than fleet of foot in discussing and understanding the impacts at a local level. The mode of communication may differ, but topics of importance should not simply stop at diocesan and deanery plenaries.

❖ **Rural Ministry**

Growth ministry is a wonderful and enriching opportunity however I am deeply concerned there is insufficient strategic emphasis on sustaining rural ministry and communities in deference to urban growth and renewal. There is an existential threat to rural parishes that ignores the real impact made in local communities in favour of fiscal and numerical measures with the inherent risk that large areas of the country will become devoid of a formal established Christian presence. This topic has many strands and I do wish to explore and better understand the role of the National Church and its stewardship of national heritage buildings, many of which are in rural parishes. The worry and burden faced by an aging and in many cases, declining church population is unsustainable. I simply do not wish to see us sleep-walk into an irreversible decline.

❖ **Working Smarter not necessarily harder!**

In all places, urban and rural, a successful church needs laity and clergy to walk side by side. Increasingly laity are taking on more and more responsibility particularly when available clergy are themselves committed to multiple parish ministry. Where or whether any of this sits within the practical scope of Synod given the big issues of the day, is open to debate. We do need to train, equip and better support lay workers and, think imaginatively how we better integrate workflows across parish, deanery and diocesan staff. We may have frailty in the numbers in stipendiary or non-stipendiary ministry but without reform of the traditional working practices that are reinforced within the modular parish system, we will to our detriment, fail to harness and sustain support from laity in the numbers required to be effective.

Thank you for considering my candidature. I hope I may have touched on themes you recognise and that I may count on your support for election to Synod