

Candidature for the House of Clergy at General Synod - 2015

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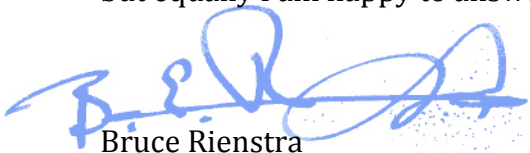
I will be away on the Curate's Cross Cultural trip on the days of the diocesan hustings on 22nd and 23rd September, therefore I hope this document will answer the public questions you may have had regarding my candidacy for General Synod. If you vote for me, it's important you know my views.

General Synod interests me greatly. I am one of those rare (and arguably odd) people who actually enjoys that sort of thing. I have been on synods in the past. As a layperson I was on Archdeaconry Synod (Diocese in Europe) for NW Europe (Netherlands, Belgium and Luxembourg) for many years and I am now on our Diocesan Synod. My interest goes back even further. I was a youth delegate to the General Convention (Synod – ECUSA) in 1976, which was the year of TEC's prayer book changes and more importantly the year the Episcopal Church approved the ordination of women to the priesthood (and the episcopate). As a 16 year old I followed the debates on these and other issues with great interest (and at times incredulity).

Similarly our church is facing issues, which need addressing. Informed decisions can only be made if the issues are discussed. The role of women as ordained ministers has not been fully resolved, though we are (finally) eventually getting there. There are other issues currently facing the church – homosexuality being only one, but also the place of the disabled (in church and society), the environment (shouldn't our south-facing roofs have solar panels?) medical ethics (in particular euthanasia and assisted dying – arguably not the same thing), our attitude to foreigners (immigrants, migrants, refugees and asylum seekers) and the church's authority in our pluralistic society (note that 75% of society take no notice of local and national church leaders on the issues facing the nation and 46% of younger people – the under 30's – consider the Church of England prejudiced against women and homosexuals*); these are all issues the church, if it is to be relevant in our society, must grapple with. It is however only possible to grapple with an issue if the issue is discussed honestly and most importantly in a way which does not polarise, in other words we must be able to not only hear opposing opinions, but also listen to them. My own opinion is one of inclusion – that Jesus' example of befriending the stranger and the outcast should be the one to follow. Should not synod demonstrate that the church accepts diversity of God's Creation, by putting to one side our own fears, prejudices and incomprehension and take part in a reasoned and open discussion?

It is true, that as a stipendiary curate it is entirely possible that I may have to resign from General Synod should my next post be outside our diocese – however I hope it will not be.

This is an outline of the address I would have given at the hustings and there would have been questions, both public and private. Hopefully I have addressed the public questions, but equally I am happy to answer any private questions by phone or email.



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* (Woodhead/YouGov 2013)