

Address to voters for General Synod Election



I would like to outline my reasons for standing for General Synod and to ask for your first vote in this election. May I also give a sincere thank you to those who elected me to the casual vacancy last year. The sessions I have attended have been invaluable in helping me become attuned to Synod life.

As I said previously my main passion in ministry is in the area of mission and renewal. I will carry this passion into my service on General Synod should I be elected. In the light of this I hope you will understand if I repeat some words from my previous address to you in the next paragraph.

I believe that the Church of England is at an exciting, yet challenging time in her history. Clergy are challenged to 'proclaim the gospel afresh in each generation' when we are ordained. This is as relevant now as it ever has been. I shall, if elected, seek to find ways of seeking to encourage Synod to be permission giving of those in parish and sector ministry. I particularly wish to see ministers enabled in appropriate risk taking as they are called to proclaim the good news of Jesus in inherited and pioneer settings. I wish to see clergy, in particular, encouraged to boldness in their leadership and to try new things alongside the holding of all that Anglicans have traditionally held dear.

The above has, I believe, been enabled by some initiatives which Synod has approved during my time of service to date. In particular, new baptism liturgies are approved to enable one of the fundamental pastoral and missional activities of parish life. Additionally, new measures around faculty jurisdiction should make it easier for me as an archdeacon and us as a Church to carry out the transforming work we wish to in our churches. It has also been intriguing to be part of the last days of a Synod that has begun the process of Reform and Renewal. I say more of this later but have enjoyed the privilege of being part of a body that has set in train a new energy in the spiritual life of the Church of England. It was also a privilege to hear such commitment to the cause of environmental concern at our final debate.

As we look to the new Synod it is evident that Issues in Human Sexuality will be a major factor. It has been a privilege to convene the Listening Process in our own diocese. This has enabled a number of conversations and encounters to take place that have been humbling and fruitful. I attended the Regional Shared Conversations on behalf of the diocese as a General Synod member and I would be keen to serve again on Synod to engage in ongoing conversation and debate. I am committed to being open to hearing a range of views on the issues at hand whilst seeking to be faithful to our agreed beliefs around Christian discipleship.

In relation to the above is a need to value our resources and use them to best effect. Our best resource is our people. I remain committed to a Church that develops clergy and lay ministry and will seek in Synod to promote this principle if elected. In our diocese I believe

my experience in chairing the First Appointments Team and involvement in the Clergy Leadership programme will help me to make a positive contribution to synod debate on ministry. Our resources also include our buildings and I am leading on the Transforming Churches project to look at how we transform community through our churches and this includes our use of buildings to best effect. I will use this experience and my work with the DAC to encourage Synod to be forward thinking in producing legislation that encourages creativity and innovation in this area. My work in chairing two national bodies seeks to further how we use our resources to best effect in promoting the mission and renewal.

I have had a commitment to the world of education throughout my adult life. A qualified teacher, I have been a school governor for 19 years and have been a Chair of Governors for 15 years. I now Chair the Diocesan Board of Education. I believe passionately in our schools and in tertiary education. It is evident that the Church of England has a major investment in education in our land and I will seek to serve on Synod, if elected, by encouraging an approach which continues to affirm education and seek how best we may, as a nation, equip our children and young people for the future. A recent report has highlighted the need for partnership in our small, usually village, schools, and I will support ways of making this happen creatively. In Synod, I would hope to see a positive climate that continues to stress our investment in our schools whilst allowing freedom to come up with entrepreneurial and creative leadership.

Reform and Renewal is the title being given to a range of proposals before the Church of England at present. As I am sure you are aware, the proposals cover finance, ministerial training and vocational discernment. They also involve questions of how we best honour our call to serve the nation as the Established Church in ways old and new for this generation and those to come. Fundamentally, these proposals are aimed at making the gospel accessible to our nation and to assist us all in developing as disciples. Both with my national commitments and in the diocese I hope I am known as someone who seeks to further these aims. I believe that there is an energy around Reform and Renewal that can bring fresh life to the parishes, deaneries and dioceses of the Church of England. I trust I will bring a voice to Synod, if elected that seeks to encourage us to refine and review the proposals so they are most suited to achieving their aim.

On advice from experienced Synod members I used my first two sessions to get the feel of how Synod operates. I was asked at the last hustings what topic my maiden speech would be on. I have, so far, kept my powder dry but my answer now is likely to be the answer I gave then. Re-imagining Ministry is the title we are using as a Church to reflect on how we are seeking to look afresh on God's calling upon our lives. In particular, how we are best equipped to encourage the ministers we have to lead the Church of the future. For those of us who are ordained this involves being open to the new, whilst valuing the calling to be priests and deacons as that ministry has been traditionally understood. It also means we are all open to the range of lay ministries that help 'bring life to the people of God'. As an archdeacon I am committed to fostering vocations to the ordained life and believe passionately in it. In the Diocesan Clergy Leadership Programme I commit myself to seeking to work alongside colleagues to develop the skills and gifts we have been given. In several key appointments we have, I believe demonstrated in my archdeaconry, how lay ministry may be the best way forward. Flexible, creative thinking about the ministry of the people of God is what is needed for the future of the Church and I will be advocating that if elected.

I trust that I have demonstrated the experience and particular areas of concern and commitment that I will bring to the floor of General Synod if elected. I would be privileged to carry the views of the diocese in my service to the Church in this way and would be committed to listening to you. Once again, I thank you for taking the time to read this paper and ask for your first vote in the election.

David Picken, September 2015