

## Nick Harding

### General Synod Election Address 2015



- **Work life:** Diocesan Children's Ministry Adviser
- **Other life:** Lay Minister (Reader), local radio, magistrate, trustee of two national charities, writer and speaker, M.U. member
- **Past life:** Teacher in Mansfield, manager of an education charity, Time Travelling! Manager and Education Officer at Southwell Minster
- **Home life:** Married to a headteacher, two great boys aged 18 and 21, enjoy walking, camping, travelling on buses and The Archers!

My heart and experience is in seeing the church work effectively with **children and young people**, valuing them as individuals and equals. The church has a responsibility to keep children and young people safe, and enable the training and equipping of leaders and workers. I believe all children have a right to hear the Gospel message, to respond, to be nurtured effectively, and to be encouraged in ministry. *At General Synod I have spoken on issues relating to children and young people, asked questions about the support and resourcing of children's advisers and church-based children's ministry. I have developed a General Synod Children Interest Group in liaison with the National Children's and Youth Adviser to support all Synod members who wish to see children and children's ministry taken more seriously by the church. I have contributed to the development of new Baptism liturgies, and worked to see the Diocese Motion on Assistants at Holy Communion become law.*

The past few years General Synod worked on **Women in the Episcopacy**. Having worked closely with many incumbents of both genders across the Diocese and elsewhere I have no reason to believe that women are not already making very effective Bishops. *I supported Women in the Episcopate as it passed through General Synod, as well as debating it in Diocesan Synod.*

I support and applaud the work done in **church schools**, and believe they are places for both high quality education, and mission. In my work with our church schools, including inspecting, governing and staff training, I have seen schools which have risen to the challenges and become the light of Christ in their communities. *I have actively supported papers and proposals concerning church schools at Synod, and spoken on the need for Christians in all forms of education to be supported by their churches.*

Having lived and worshipped in Mansfield for the past 30 years I have seen the positive work the church can do in local areas when it is focused on **mission** and looking outwards. This has to be the priority of the church at the highest level in order to fulfil our role in bringing Jesus to the nation. As parishes work together in clusters and Deaneries there is potential for greater creativity and flexibility in mission and outreach. *I have supported changes in church structures and systems to provide for quicker changes and more freedom for the development of fresh expressions and new ways of being church.*

I strongly believe that **lay leaders and ministers** will play a key role in the future of the church at all levels, both structurally and in the delivery of ministry. I want to see the role and value of lay leaders enhanced as new patterns of worship and fresh expressions of church evolve. *I have spoken and voted in favour of an enhanced role for the laity, supported reports on changes to future leadership of churches, and supported the Readers on Synod group. In the future the ministry of the laity has to be promoted more on General Synod.*

The national church institutions face a time of **financial challenge**, and there will be inevitable reductions in staffing levels. *I will continue to fight for the retention of posts that relate to mission and ministry, including national advisers, while encouraging the institutions to look carefully at administration and support costs. We need to view the outward-looking work of the church as essential.*

The church must be realistic about **marriages and relationships**, second marriages and relationship breakdown, but should also speak up for the importance of marriage and family. Coming from a traditional Christian view on issues around sexuality, I have been listening and learning, and will continue to do so. *I have met and had open discussions with people across the Diocese who hold different views, and learned from them. I am keen for General Synod to continue its current process of dialogue in order to understand the wide range of views on issues around relationships and sexuality.*

I believe that the role of **ordained ministers** is changing, and there needs to be more flexibility in the future church. Clergy should be paid appropriately and valued highly, while also being open to proper oversight and effective appraisal. Churches need mature, well-trained and mission-minded leaders who want to look outwards and work with laity. *I have supported the clergy terms of service legislation, and will be supporting new ways to train, enable and assess clergy for future ministry.*

General Synod can seem remote, confusing and secretive, even for those of us who have been there! I believe in complete **openness and transparency**. All significant votes at General Synod are electronic, and are recorded and put on the General Synod website pages. *I supported this, and have communicated clearly the life and business of Synod through the **personal General Synod diary** I have written and published on the Diocesan website after every group of sittings. This has been a positive way of communicating the work of General Synod to the laity of the Diocese, and one I would hope to continue.*

What can I offer this time round?

- The experiences gained in 27 years of full-time lay ministry
- Experience of Synod processes, and contributing to Synod work over the past 10 years
- A national reputation as a speaker, trainer and writer
- Experience of working on national church and GS, committees, advisory groups and boards
- A willingness to listen to the views of the laity from across our Diocese
- Knowledge and expertise in children's and youth ministry, schools and lay ministry
- An understanding of the character and needs of our Diocese having visited and worked with many churches and all Deaneries
- Wider knowledge of the church - other denominations, agencies and structures
- A willingness to continue to devote the required time and commitment
- A grounded home life in Mansfield with community, family and magistrate responsibilities
- A grounded church life as a Reader in two churches

Despite the frustrations that we all recognise I still believe in a national church which is open to a range of worshipping traditions, has clear teaching, welcomes the young as members and leaders, encourages creativity and flexibility, and is committed to being relevant in our changing society. If re-elected to Synod I will continue to strive to forward these aims. Your prayers are appreciated.

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