

## **Miss Debbie Woods**

10 South Downs

Knutsford

Cheshire

WA16 8ND

Age: 54

Email: [Debbiewoods67@gmail.com](mailto:Debbiewoods67@gmail.com)



### **In the national church**

I have been a member of General Synod in the last 6 year quinquennium! A number of longstanding Synod members have said that it takes at least 5 years to understand how Synod operates and, in that respect, I would welcome the opportunity to build on the knowledge, understanding and relationships I have formed over this period, to contribute meaningfully to the life of the next Synod and to help shape the agenda of the Church of England over this season of great change.

Parts of the church face significant decline in attendance and that rate of decline in attendance of our young people is catastrophic in many places. The Synod will need to face up to significant challenges as we live in this context, and with the ongoing impact of Covid 19 on our faith, our fellowship and our finances.

Perhaps more significantly I believe it faces a crisis of confidence in the Word of God as good, relevant and true for our generation and so the need is as important as ever *to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints* in all our deliberations and decisions over the next quinquennium.

The pattern of the last quinquennium saw significant reduction in time spent in debate, however, I was glad to participate in the increased opportunities to listen carefully and respectfully to others whilst sharing, encouraging and contending in small group discussions, informal meetings as well as the very many and helpful fringe meetings that take place around synods. I believe the time spent learning and participating in these meetings will give me the background to contribute effectively to the business of the new quinquennium.

It was a privilege to serve on the Crown Nominations Commission in the appointment of Mark Tanner as the bishop of Chester in 2020. It was a joy to see the Holy Spirit work through a diverse group from a wide range of churchmanship nationally and across the Diocese, praying and working together as we discerned His will for that appointment. The process gave me a very helpful insight into issues experienced across Chester Diocese.

### **In the local church**

I have been a member of St John the Baptist church Knutsford for 33 years.

I have served for 19 of those years as churchwarden and, along with sitting on Diocesan and Deanery synods for much of that time, feel I understand the pressures felt at parish level across our Diocese. The Church of England system of having a Christian presence in each parish around the country is precious. We must look for ways of ensuring that the central church provides the practical, financial and administrative support to free up parishes for mission, to serve and reach our nation for Christ.

I believe it is important for churches to support one another in gospel partnership where possible, and I have enjoyed that partnership with St Peter's Rock Ferry in our Diocese, as well as our overseas partners in Kenya, Mozambique and the Czech Republic.

I have been a youth group leader for over 10 years, having the joy and privilege of leading bible study groups and youth group meetings for 13 – 18 year olds, along with the ever-so-slightly-less joyful privilege of spending weekends away in frozen Januarys. More recently I have led our climber and explorer groups of 6 – 10 year olds on Sunday mornings. Nothing

has cheered my soul more than watching our children and young people come to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, to trust Him for themselves as His disciples and to be equipped to reach out and speak out to others with that same Good news through schools, universities, workplaces, quietly in homes, and confidently in the public square.

I love to encourage women in discipleship and evangelism. I have lead a small team of women at St John's as we put together a programme of lively book clubs, breakfasts, walks, dinners and conferences for women to laugh, learn and pray together, support one another and build relationships in church and with friends and neighbours. We've enjoyed talks and testimonies; perfume and chocolate as we share our lives and faith in Jesus. I support the 'Setting God's people free' agenda, so that all church members are enabled to live out their faith in all of their lives.

### **In work**

I am an Associate Professor and a Deputy Safeguarding Officer at the University of Law (formerly College of Law) in Manchester, having previously worked in our Christleton Campus in Chester for 16 years.

I teach on our Undergraduate and Postgraduate programmes and am a skills coach supporting solicitor apprentices in their workplaces.

Both at Chester and now Manchester I have led and supported the student Lawyers Christian Fellowship groups. I believe it is important to help students prepare to live as Christians in the workplace. There is a frightening drop out in young people actively maintaining their relationship with Jesus in the early days of their working lives, even those formerly involved in their CUs at University. I believe that my experience in working with students and young lawyers at this critical time allows me to speak into the church's strategy for reaching and discipling young adults as they transition into the workplace.

In Manchester I have hosted meetings and conferences for the Manchester Lawyers Christian Fellowship, for lawyers of all ages, backgrounds and disciplines as we encourage and support one another in our workplace challenges and evangelistic opportunities.

### **In the wider Christian community**

I am Secretary and a Trustee of the charity, Growing Young Disciples, which is devoted to promoting and supporting biblical children's, youth and families' ministry. In a busy life, I am happy to carve out time to serve this charity as it trains, resources and advises parents, volunteer workers, churches and full time church workers. This involvement allows me access to great research and resources on issues facing the youngest children to Gen Z, of the impact of social media platforms, inclusion, identity, parenting and reaching our young people for Christ.

### **In conclusion**

I am passionate about the local church and our children and young people. It is important that the local church is encouraged to be effective in its mission and ministry. We must be careful to ensure that resources are used effectively to support parish ministry.

Synod will continue to debate issues of human identity and flourishing in the church and wider society. We need to be welcoming to all and confident about our belief in the goodness of God and His Word to reach, save and sanctify an anxious and often confused generation.

Thank you for reading this.

Proposer: Mr Neil Wall

Secunder: Mr Peter Hart