

Canon Dr John Mason

Standing for re-election to General Synod

Nominated by Betty Renshaw, former Chair of Chester Diocesan Board of Finance

Seconded by Phillip Posnett, member of Malpas Deanery Synod



I am seeking your support as lay members of the Deanery Synods of the Chester Archdeaconry. I am very grateful to Betty and Phillip for enthusiastically proposing and seconding my nomination.

Who am I?

I was born in 1959 in Southport, Lancashire. I am married with four daughters – two adults and two teenagers – and, though now retired from full-time employment, I remain energetic and active with charity, church and family work. I enjoy a challenge and working with people (the two often being connected).

Brief Biography

- I graduated from Cambridge University in 1980, and started my career as a research scientist.
- After receiving a physics PhD in 1985, I became involved in general, financial and project management at Harwell Laboratory in Oxfordshire. In 1994 I took up a senior position at an analytical services laboratory, LGC, where my focus was on business matters, and I sat on the main board as LGC rapidly grew nationally and internationally.
- Looking for change, God provided me with an opportunity for Christian service as Chester's Diocesan Secretary in 2006. In this role I learned about synodical processes, ecclesiastical law, interactions between the laity and clergy in general, and the needs and make-up of the Diocese of Chester in particular. I was appointed a Lay Canon in 2008.
- Forced by a cancer diagnosis to leave the position of Diocesan Secretary, I was enormously grateful to receive successful NHS treatment that allowed me to return to the workplace a few years later. I became director of a medical devices start-up company in 2014.
- In the last 10 years I have continued voluntary Diocesan work, serving as the Chair of the House of Laity from 2012 to 2021, and on Bishop's Council, the Finance & Scrutiny, and the HR Committees. I was also Chair of the Vacancy-in-See Committee and Chair of the organising committee of the Lay Conference "*Mission Possible*" held in May 2017.

Christian Formation

I was brought up in a Christian household where church attendance on a Sunday (at least once) was a way of life and non-negotiable. I made my personal Christian commitment as a teenager; whether this was despite or because of the nature of this strict church upbringing I'm not entirely sure, but I am indebted to my parents for it. I have always felt God working through my life, and I remained closely involved with the Church as an adult as I worked to live out and grow my life as a Christian. For more than 20 years I have been a PCC member and Treasurer of St Boniface, Bunbury, but earlier in my life I worshipped regularly in churches of widely differing traditions.

Inclusivity

With experience of and respect for all traditions, I am a strong supporter of an inclusive church that exists for everyone, regardless of gender, disability, ethnicity, socio-economic status, mental health or sexuality, and that is open and equal to everyone at all levels and in all roles. I am fully engaged with Living in Love and Faith (LLF) and pray that we might yet find a way to hold together our church and its range of traditions.

General Synod Challenges

Having been a member of General Synod, I know the many issues that it is grappling with at the moment. LLF may appear to dominate the landscape, but there are many other important matters such as:

- Safeguarding – how to repent of our past failings as a church and ensure that these terrible injustices are never repeated.
- How to simplify our parish and diocesan systems to free up resources for mission.
- Establishing a new vision for the Church of England as a mixed ecology that is simpler, humbler and bolder.
- Everyday Faith –building up the laity to enable the whole people of God to live out the Good News of Jesus Christ confidently in all of life, Sunday to Saturday.

To give you a flavour of where I stand on these matters, I think there is much scope to simplify our systems and governance. To do so is essential if we are going to remain effective. I strongly support the parish as a unit of mission, but believe we must also explore other ways to reach those – particularly the young – whose needs we are currently not meeting. I see the role of the laity as increasingly important and hence my enthusiasm and support for Everyday Faith. With regard to safeguarding, I believe sadly that, despite huge strides, we still have much more to do to change our culture.

What I would hope to offer if re-elected.

My background has provided wide and relevant experience for General Synod and, having already served for 11 years, I know how the system works and how to be an effective member. I have been fully active on Synod: I have prayed for it; served on a Standing Committee; asked questions; made speeches; moved amendments; helped organise the Open Synod group; and made wonderful friends from all traditions. I have seen how apparently impossible problems – such as women's bishops – can be overcome when we work together, listening to each other and to the Holy Spirit whilst exploring scripture. I would want to continue in the same vein: not afraid to state my position, but always prepared to listen and work with others to find creative solutions. I would also aim to improve my connections and communication with deanery synods.

I believe I continue to have something to offer, and I hope you will give me the chance to find out whether my belief is well-placed. Please consider voting for me high on your list – preferably top – as everyone's vote is important in a Single Transferable Vote election such as this.

Thank you for reading this statement. If you want to contact me about anything in it (or not in it), I would be very happy to hear from you.

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