

General Synod Election Address

Peter Wilkinson

I am a former teacher of physics having taught for over 33 years. During that time I undertook, at various times, the roles of Deputy SENCo, Head of the Learning Support Unit for pupils on the autistic spectrum and Head of Year.

I also spent three years as an Education Officer where I dealt with pupil issues such as admissions and exclusions, Special Educational Needs matters and some HR involvement.

Having left teaching when the school where I taught was due to close and amalgamate with another secondary school in a new building, I then found further employment in the Customer Services Department of Cheshire West and Chester Council where I worked for just over nine years before finally retiring in July 2020. During this period I dealt with queries across a wide variety of the Council's services including being part of the Council's Covid-19 response.

I also serve my local community as a Parish Councillor having been a councillor for just over 10 years and this has included a four-year spell as Chairman followed by three years as Vice Chairman. Currently I am Chairman once again and acting joint Clerk to the Council following the resignation of our previous Clerk.

My involvement with Church matters has been of long-standing. I have been a PCC member for around forty years and currently I am a member of Middlewich Deanery Synod and the Diocesan Synod, having been re-elected in the recent elections. I also serve as Secretary to the Deanery Synod.

I have been a member of the Diocesan Board of Patronage for about 30 years and have represented the Board in several appointments of incumbents to parishes of which the Board is the patron.

For relaxation I have been a church bellringer for over 50 years having learnt when I was 11! I have held various offices within bellringing circles including being Master of the Chester Diocesan Guild and subsequently the Guild's Bell Restoration Officer. I have also represented the Guild on the Central Council of Church Bellringers for over twenty years and chaired the Central Council's Bell Restoration Committee.

Now that I have retired from full-time work, I offer myself for election to General Synod, something I have been keen to do for some time but which work commitments made it impossible to guarantee being available as required to fulfil the obligations of membership, particularly being available to attend General Synod meetings. Now that I am free from those work constraints I feel it is now appropriate to offer myself for election.

I believe that the Church should be taking a prominent and leading role in the current issues facing the world. Climate change is, clearly, a major challenge facing humanity. The Church must take the lead in ensuring that investments are made ethically and that all church activities are as carbon neutral as possible. General Synod has a major part to play in demonstrating this commitment to care for God's Creation by openly debating the issues and ensuring that the results of those debates are carried forward into actions. Much work needs to be done to support churches changing to alternative energy sources where it is possible thus reducing the carbon footprint whilst also respecting the historic fabric of many of the church buildings.

Great challenges face the Church following the Covid-19 pandemic. Whilst much needs to be done in the parishes as we begin to emerge from restrictions it is vital that deaneries, dioceses and the central church all play their part in supporting the return to whatever the new normality proves to be and ensuring that the church's ministry is available to all people.

I believe that I have the knowledge and experience to be an effective member of General Synod and, if elected, I promise to undertake the role to the best of my ability and to be diligent in representing the Chester Diocese through General Synod.