

Simon Small - General Synod - Election Address

Hello, I'm Simon. I have been married to Helen for seventeen years and we have a fourteen-year-old daughter. I have lived in Hartford since 2001.

We are members at Christ Church Greenbank in Hartford Parish and have been there for over four years now. Before that we were members at Connection Church in Northwich for a couple of years but most of my Christian life was while we were members at Life Church Manchester (formerly South Manchester Christian Fellowship) in Sale.

I still think of myself as a new Christian. When I met Helen in 2001 she said I would have to get to know God and Jesus if I wanted to get to know her. She challenged me to attend an Alpha Course at SMCF, I did. My nature, fitting for a chartered civil engineer, is to question things. I became known as the engineer with the note pad and questions. A lot of people invested time and love in my journey to making a commitment to Jesus. I believed organised religion had a lot to answer for in the world, I still do in a healthy way and yet here I find myself nominating myself for the General Synod (isn't God great !).

I have faith and trust in the Bible as Gods Word to us, but I still have questions. I have learned that it is okay to have doubts (as opposed to unbelief). I believe that the pursuit of questions that lead to God is important, I have learnt that a lot of the other questions can be less important.

I believe that God has given me the gift of wisdom and faced with the challenge of being part of the General Synod in the current times it seems important for me to serve using that gift. My nomination was prompted by the Church of England's discussions and anticipated vote around the subject of marriage. I have no doubt that there will be other challenges in this changing world during the term of service.

If elected to the General Synod I am conscious that I will appear a lightweight in respect of theological training and study. I will be relying heavily on those scholars that have done work relating to the reliability of the Bible as the God breathed word of God for us.

Naively I have thought that the Church would, by now, have done all the talking and interpretation of God's word that would have been necessary. I am starting to learn that it is not that simple. I know that unsaved people in the world where they are, have to see Jesus and God as relevant to them; in my mind though that does not mean our evangelism should involve stretching or bending or making more palatable the word of God.

In my view sincerity and experience is no substitute for the word of God. However, a recognition of sincerity, experience and an openness to a conversation can be a starting point for sharing the transforming Word of God. If we are not looking at the word of God and putting it into action - what are we doing ? Like it or not, the unsaved world first sees the Church from the outside (as I did) and will first judge it from what it sees it putting into action. I am asking for your vote to put me in a position where I can influence what that looks like on your behalf.

In respect of my skills and experience for the role: I am in my mid-fifties, married relatively late in life and have a teenage daughter at a local school which gives me a good insight into the pressures and struggles of the younger generations (although I appreciate I might see only the tip of the iceberg); I have been a Director at Life Church Manchester; I work for a multi-national company where equality, diversity and inclusion are high on the agenda so see how that works out in reality; I have travelled across the world with work and seen humanity at its best, worse and hopeful; and, my work involves making decision about the environment, sustainability and increasingly social value.

Thank you for reading.