

GENERAL SYNOD  
ELECTIONS TO THE HOUSE OF LAITY 2021

ELECTION ADDRESS by  
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Elections to the General Synod are always important, but even more so this year as the Church of England faces crucial decisions about complex, difficult matters of human sexuality and identity, as well as struggling with declining attendances and increasing financial pressures.

[Who am I?](#)

I was born into a clergy household and have been “in the church” all my life. I have worshipped in rural parishes and large urban congregations, and served on several PCCs, acting as secretary, treasurer and churchwarden at various times. I had the privilege of being Diocesan Secretary in Canterbury for a fascinating 17 years until 2007. I have been a member of General Synod since 2010. My wife, Lynda, and I are members of the church family at Seasalter in the Whitstable Team Ministry.

[The big issues](#)

**Fewer people, less money.** For the last 100 years and more, membership of organised religion has been declining across the First World, partly because of all kinds of secular factors beyond our control. Many churches are having difficulty finding people to play important roles, and the number of young people in our churches is distressingly low. Falling numbers inevitably mean financial pressures and our diocese, like many others, is having to rethink the way we should “be church”. There are no easy answers to these fundamental questions but we must not bury our heads in the sand and pretend it isn’t happening. Bold, imaginative thinking is required, right across the church, encouraging the laity to flourish, without losing the unique qualities of local parish life.

**Sexuality.** The Church of England has struggled for some years with questions of sexuality and human identity, often appearing to lag behind secular knowledge and understanding. Finally, we are addressing the issue through the *Living in Love and Faith* process. In the coming sessions the General Synod will attempt to find ways in which we can learn to disagree well (in our Archbishop’s phrase), and present a caring, inclusive face to the world. I believe in a God who is radically inclusive, so the church should be providing the chance to flourish to all, irrespective of race, colour, disability, gender or sexual orientation.

**SUMMARY FOR THE BUSY VOTER ...**

- I have knowledge and experience of the church and its ways from rural parish to General Synod, and all stops in between.
- I believe that we have to grasp the nettle of declining attendances and failing finances.
- I believe in radical inclusion in all aspects of life, particularly in the church.