

GENERAL SYNOD ELECTIONS 2021

PENELOPE [PENNY] ALLEN

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Proposed by: John [Tug] Wilson, Lichfield Deanery, Lay Chair of Lichfield Diocese, General Synod 2005-21 [also seeking re-election]. **Seconded by:** John Naylor, Chair of the Diocesan Board of Finance, Lay Chair of Hodnet Deanery [also seeking re-election].

<p>Age 71</p> <p>Status Married to David for 47 years</p> <p>Family Two married daughters</p> <p>Career Teacher, retired</p> <p>Church The Church At Perton [an Anglican and URC partnership]</p> <p>Deanery Trysull, former Lay Chair</p> <p>Diocese Diocesan Synod, Bishop's Council, Finance and Glebe Committees Patronage Board, Vacancy in See Committee, former Diocesan Representative to Crown Nominations Committee</p> <p>General Synod 2010 – 2021</p>	
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Why stand for General Synod again?

- I have been serving the diocese on General Synod for eleven years now and during the last six years I have been the **only lay woman representative for our diocese**.
- Lay women have always been under-represented in General Synod. Now we have an opportunity to change that, especially as we have an **extra diocesan lay place, seven lay candidates and six clergy**.
- There has been an imbalance in churchmanship during the last six years and I hope that this will be resolved so that the range of traditions is proportionately represented.
- I have been active in contributing to debates on finance, education, the environment and climate change, sexuality, relationships with other denominations, meeting digitally [I was one of the small group asked to go to London to vote on this] and spontaneously in response to debate.
- Having attended all sessions I have written a diary which is available to all at: <https://pennyatgeneralsynod.weebly.com>. As the last sessions have been on Zoom it has been difficult to complete this over the last year, so the last diary entry is for April.
- The Church is still facing critical times in terms of employment, levels of parish shares, issues about mission, ecumenism, sexuality, inclusion, safeguarding, climate change and our buildings.
- The Church Commissioners are making extra money available for mission and as a diocese we need to bid for more of this.
- As a teacher of RE and Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education I have had the privilege of standing alongside young people. We need to enthuse our young people with the love of Jesus and help them build a relationship with God. Social media plays a key role in developing most young people's faith, and good relationships.
- We also need to focus on all generations and digital technology, for which I am very grateful, and for the extra-ordinary efforts of priests and people during the pandemic. This needs to continue and be expanded, so we can continue to engage those in our congregations and those at home.

Church and community experiences

I am a member of The Church At Perton and the Ecumenical Church Council [the equivalent of the PCC and the elders] attending the Deanery Synod, formerly chairing Trysull Deanery Synod for ten years with three different RDs. I have served on General Synod since 2010 and am the Secretary and former Vice Chair of Open Synod [the G.S. social and charitable fundraising group open to all views]; Women And The Church and Inclusive Church, as this keeps me informed on topical issues. As a

South Staffordshire District Independent Councillor I am involved in making decisions for our local communities and as Chair of our Parish Council for the last two years, I have been heavily involved in community support during the pandemic, also a major refurbishment of our Civic Centre. I really value meeting residents and the people in the street. It is very important to me to be out in the community, representing the church, and doing what I can to help others. I am also a first school governor.

The Future

Many churches now have depleted reserves and are struggling to maintain their parish shares. Parishes in poverty stricken urban and rural areas need extra support. We must do what we can to support our parishes.

We should apply for more funding to support the development of our church buildings for community use so that parishes can maintain ministry by raising funds. Also acknowledge the changing nature of a priest's work with training for multi-parish benefices and team leading.

We need to do more to reach young people. Links with church and state schools need expanding. School chaplains need more support. We need to continue to develop digital resources that are age-appropriate.

I would love to see more chaplains and the Church supporting willing people in a central organisation as we need to meet people where they are, at work, at leisure, and in these challenging circumstances.

The sexuality debate and acceptance of gay people and priests has dominated the Church for some time. Unfortunately this has led to less of a focus on sexual abuse and safeguarding which are major concerns. I believe the Church needs to generously accept people without discrimination, regardless of their disability, sexuality, ethnicity or gender.

John Wilson explains why he supports Penny's nomination for General Synod:

Penny takes her role as one of our Lay synod representatives on General Synod very seriously. She plays a proactive part in contributing to the work of the Synod both in the debates and behind the scenes to ensure Synod is open to all (She is Secretary of the Open Synod Group).

I am pleased, therefore, to support again Penny's nomination for election to General Synod.

Many will know of Penny through Diocesan Synod and Bishop's Council playing a full and energetic part; in particular as a member of the group overseeing the finances of the Diocese.

There is more to Penny though. She actively supports both lay and clergy through her involvement in her church and the deanery. Her involvement and breadth of experience ensures she is well versed in the issues facing the church in the 2020s.

Penny's background in teaching and as a local councillor enables her to make a unique contribution to General Synod debates. She is experienced in speaking and is not afraid to speak, particularly when difficult subjects are under discussion. In selecting who you vote for please consider Penny for your first or high preference choice as I am sure she will continue to give a strong lead in support of the people and parishes in our diocese.

I hope to continue to serve you. Please consider me for your first or a high preference vote.