

Andrew Charles, MBA, MA:

General Synod Election Address: August 2021:

I am a 58 year old, married man. My wife and I have two lovely children; Alexander; in his final university year, and Kathryn, an A Level student. I worship at St. Nicholas' Church, Newport: our roots at this particular church extend over 21 years. I am in my 16th year on Diocesan Synod; and this year I am proud to have been returned to Lichfield Diocesan Synod for a 6th term in office, representing my Deanery.

Since 2009, I been a member of Lichfield Diocesan Synod Bishop's Council, and I am re-standing for a 5th term this year on Bishop's Council and the Board of Finance where I sit as a director. I have also been on the Vacancy in See Committee since 2006.

I am standing for election as your representative on General Synod. I promise that I shall always take my lead vis-à-vis voting on any/all issues that will come up in General Synod during the next five years, from you, the members of Diocesan Synod – whatever the issue/s are and whether or not the electoral wishes of our Diocesan Synod agree with my personal views on any matter.

THE FUTURE OF THE CHURCH: Many people within Lichfield Diocese have a deep and valid concern over the future of our church; both locally and nationally. I hold this concern; and with a colleague of mine on Bishop's Council/Board of Finance have been pro-active at both bringing our deep concerns to the council to try to get responses up and running to look at answers vis a vis strategic ways in which we feel the church needs to grow both in Faith members and financially. Many see a church policy at the present time of 'managed decline' from the national church and all dioceses. This is very much the case with declining numbers of priests; church closures etc. This perception of managed decline must be reversed by dedicated evangelism and financial strategic growth. It is obvious; as proven by church statistics; that we have a rapidly ageing church that will have a very deep economic impact on our future. Church finances are of current deep concern as most churches within our diocese are only meeting their parish share cost by delving into financial reserves; that being, at best, a life-line that will only last in the very short-term; meaning that our total parish share income; that is vital to the running of our diocese is under a ticking time bomb. We thus need to evangelize and produce church attendee growth and save our 1000 year old plus policy of parishes. I support the current '**Save the Parish Campaign**': which is the aiming to save defining element of Christianity within our nation.

CLIMATE CHANGE: There are many issues facing the church of major importance; we see a cacophony of climate change disasters on our news; and I fully support the General Synod support expressing determination that the Church of Jesus Christ take bold and even challenging decisions thus committing ourselves to meeting a 2030 target of becoming a NET ZERO CHURCH. I support our Church Commissioners who have led the way in most impressive and game changing policies on both green investments and shareholder usage of power to assist climate change reduction policies.

ANTI-RACISM TASKFORCE: I feel the report recently issued 'From Lament to Action' is an excellent route upon which to see the basis of encouraging growth of ethnic minority church membership and see ethnic minority leadership roles at all levels within the church from ethnic minority communities. Despite the decision of Archbishops Council one hopes our diocese can take a local step to encourage growth of the ethnic minority representation within our church.

CHURCH OF ENGLAND/METHODIST 'UNION': I support the overwhelming vote (218 votes to 73) to approve the creation of a body, Life in Covenant, to oversee the next stage of the Covenant between our church and the Methodists. We should be positive about this despite 'unresolved' challenges and see the abundant distinctive gifts each of the partner's bring to the table. Despite our different ecclesiology's and teachings that as of yet do not fully match; this partnership can bring many benefits as we commit to be guided by God's Will for our future.

I realize only too well that we have many significant issues to address in the coming years. Issues that I hope and pray will be able to be resolved to the mutual satisfaction of all sections within our Church Family.

I was delighted with the final outcome many moons ago re: women bishops and priests and I stand for an all-inclusive church. We have coming up many important issues for the church, including a great need for an active evangelism of mission: how stop the decline of numbers within our faith, and to actively bring discipleship back as a core value to each and every one of our parishes, so that we may reach out to our communities bringing the message of Our Lord God and start to grow the church again.

We must as the Church of England actively pursue a better standard of living for the significant numbers within our population within our Diocese and throughout the UK, who have to suffer the indignity of living near to; or even below; the 'poverty line.' We live in one of the world's richest nations, and it brings shame to all of us that we see such an ever increasing gap between the poor and the super-rich. We as a church must encourage our government to do more, and try to inspire a Victorian ethos of wealth distribution/great works for the betterment of our society within the richest elite of the UK.

We need to develop better inter-faith relations, and build inter community links that makes our nation stable, and continue to uphold Britain's historical stance as a tolerant, just, and safe place to live. At this time of religious extremism, we must combat the vocal bile, and terrorism that stems from extremism from any source.

Human sexuality and same sex marriage will be a huge issue during the next five years. I stand for an all-inclusive church; within which God's Love is unconditionally open to all whom to come to The Lord through Jesus.

I see other issues arising including: young people and schools, mission, leadership in the Church of England, the needs and contributions of older people, 'Just War', criminal justice, medical ethics and much more.

I will, if you see fit to elect me as your representative, be ever willing to listen to anyone's views on any matter, so that I may take such information to Synod. I will be representing YOU in as full a manner as one can. I pray that you will give me this opportunity to undertake such important work on your behalf.

With God's Blessing to you all,

Andrew Charles, MBA, MA.