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Proposed by: Rosalind Clarke – Stafford Deanery
Seconded by: John (Tug) Wilson – Lichfield Deanery

Dear Elector,

I am writing to ask for your first-preference vote, or a high- preference vote, for the forthcoming elections. It would be a huge privilege to serve you within the House of Laity of General Synod. Allow me introduce myself and explain why I am appealing for your vote.

About me

I am a life-long Anglican, coming to faith as a teenager whilst part of the parish church youth group in a deprived area of Manchester. I have never been “just an attender” at church. I have always been actively involved in each of the three churches where I have been a member. As a teenager I was an active member of the Church Lad’s Brigade and rose to become a junior officer.

I am married with two adult children and three grandchildren. I am a devotee of football, cricket and rugby and in the best traditions of notable Anglicans, a railway enthusiast concentrating on great railway journeys. I take an active interest in local politics and community action. I am also a reasonably keen gardener.

I have a degree of facial disfigurement, the legacy of Bell’s Palsy that did not respond to treatment which explains the somewhat strange look in my photo. Sadly, the look in photographs is worse when I smile! This condition results in some minor problems but in the main does not inhibit me in leading services, preaching and performing church, community and charity work. It does, however, help to keep me humble.

Life experiences

In my early twenties, I attended a Bible College in Birmingham after which I worked for two years as a Youth and Parish Worker in inner- city Birmingham where I established a Youth Club and worked alongside the Vicar doing general parish duties including parochial visiting. The remainder of my employment was in Public Service as a Local Authority Social Worker and, later, a Probation Officer. In both Public Service roles I was a mental health specialist. I am now experiencing a rich and very busy retirement. The roles of Social Worker and Probation Officer have given me real insights into the lives of people in need and how the Authorities react to, and address, their problems. Both jobs gave me a real sense of how authority ought to be exercised in a responsible manner.

Church life

I have been an active member of the Parish of Bilston for forty years. In 1987 I became a Reader, a ministry I continue to exercise. I regularly take advantage of the continuing training opportunities provided by the Diocese and others. For the past few years I have been the P.C.C. Secretary for the parish and one of the district churches. I am a Mentor on The Living Discipleship course run by the Lichfield Diocese, though this activity has, along with many others, been halted by the Covid pandemic. Additionally, I am in my third term as a Deanery and Diocesan Synod member. Currently, I am a member of the Deanery Shaping for Mission team, which is looking at how local churches will best be able to continue ministry in the coming years.

I am a volunteer with two local welfare charities serving as the Secretary. I have a passion for the plight of persecuted Christians worldwide. I publish a monthly prayer bulletin for parish worship- leaders and intercessors, highlighting the situation for Christians in specific countries along with the needs of persecuted individuals. In 2015 I introduced a motion to the P.C.C. calling for the Church of England to set aside a specific Sunday dedicated to remembering the plight of our persecuted brothers and sisters. The motion progressed successfully through P.C.C, Deanery and Diocesan Synods but disappeared when it reached General Synod. If elected, perhaps I will find out what happened to it!!

Final thoughts

As a Church, we face serious issues in the coming years, including the financial situation, the age profile of many of its institutions and local congregations, its apparent appeal to a limited section of society and the continuing struggle to maintain buildings not always suited to modern requirements. In my opinion, the church has a problem of maintaining commitment and discipleship, especially amongst younger people who face many distractions.

Despite the pessimism of some about the place of our church in society and its prospects, I am firmly convinced that when the Gospel is faithfully preached and lived-out in the lives of the followers of Jesus, there is always the potential for new and unexpected developments. If elected I will devote the time necessary to faithfully serve on General Synod and seek God's help and guidance to fulfil my role. I will provide regular reports on the work of the Synod and be available to answer questions and receive input. I will listen to all shades of opinion within the church in reaching decisions on the issues presented to General Synod.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my request.