

Dear Electors

I am an engineer who has spent a career managing international hi-tech businesses. I have significant experiences of operating in different cultures including American, Swiss, French, Sierra Leone (where I helped to re-establish secondary education) and China. I am particularly involved in China where, despite being from a radically different **culture**, I have become accepted as a member of a Chinese family based in Beijing and have a godson who was baptised in my local village church in Staffordshire. During my career I have been heavily involved in **Education** across the world and in the last decade I have also been a director of an asset management company based in Geneva gaining considerable knowledge of **Finance**. As a consequence, I feel I am able to bring a different perspective to the debate raging on cultural differences.

More recently I have been inspired to get involved as Churchwarden, an active member of Deanery Synod (Shaping for Mission), a Lay Member of Diocesan Synod, a Lay Member of the Diocesan Board of Education, and a Lay Member of Lichfield Bishops Council.

During my time on Bishop's Council, a small group of members (of which I am one) have concluded that the church at all levels has become too inward looking, and that the age distribution of congregations the church has favoured is the elderly at the expense of the including the young. What disturbs me is that congregations have been declining for nearing a century and the trend looks to continue. I am strongly opposed to the Church's current approach of '**managing decline**' as my experience is that this invariably leads to extinction. Extinction will be triggered by the rapid emergence of a financial crisis that will come as a shock to the people leading the Church of England.

As a serial entrepreneur, who has made a career of challenging established expert views, I am horrified that the whole church has adopted the approach of 'Managing Decline'. In past centuries, the nave of each church also served as the local community centre but in Victorian times use was subverted to purely religious functions. The majority of our church buildings are still at the centre of communities but are now totally underutilised and restricted to purveying Church of England ritual. The future can only be created through reconnecting with the whole **community**, as involving people will enable new **revenue** streams to emerge. I believe that church utilisation must increase by welcoming a diversity of uses by the whole community. This has to include involvement with organisations that employ people, as modern society dictates that most inter-personal relationships and communities are work based and are independent of dormitory location. It is in this way that the Church is most likely to reconnect with the community and grow.

As a recently appointed churchwarden, I have become aware of the well-meaning, but stifling, **bureaucracy** that I have observed sapping the enthusiasm of potential new members who are keen to help and do things. This rapidly leads to people walking away from the Church. Such bureaucracy also increases the costs to the parishes at a time when payment of the parish share, in 80% of Lichfield diocese parishes, is only achieved by eating into reserves. There needs to be a major campaign to challenge bureaucracy throughout the Church. A new broom is needed.

I believe that these messages must be promulgated at all levels in the church. I am seeking election to General Synod in order represent and implement this approach in the highest parliamentary body in the Church of England. I pray for your support.

Dr John Richard Fawn