



John Welsby - Introduction.....

From coming to faith as a child to the present day, the Church of England has been my home; I am asking for your support as I seek this opportunity to play a part in influencing its future.

Born in Manchester, I met my wife at university. We have been married for 42 years, have three daughters and six grandchildren. Our daughters were born and brought up in Liverpool. We came to Wolverhampton in 2005 and moved into the parish of St. Jude's, a church which reflects the City's diversity.

Please get in touch if you would like to find out any more about me or to discuss anything arising from my thoughts below.

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Church and Community - Nobody lights a lamp to put it under a bowl.....

When first married we moved into a deprived part of inner-city Liverpool where we lived for 25 years. Our parish church was renovated and became a church and community centre, with a single shared entrance. There are many varied examples today of successful engagement between churches and local communities. It has been good to hear of so many parishes lighting up their communities during the pandemic through loving service. Some of the historic links between church and community have been weakened so we need to work harder to remake links.

I would like to see our church nationally review its financial and structural priorities to ensure that it is geared up to stimulating and resourcing local visions.

Living in the World - You are the salt of the world.....

My understanding of God's calling to me centred on being His witness in my job and in our community. I believe that in our churches, we must do more to equip each other to live out our faith wherever we find ourselves in the world.

I retired early but was keen to maintain links with the workplace and became a voluntary workplace chaplain. I provide a 'listening ear' to over 500 staff - of any faith and none. Three things have stood out:

- many people are ready to talk about the issues they face in their lives
- people have many needs to which we have key answers in Christ
- for many people, churches are no longer places they would think of contacting

As fewer people come to us, we need to think about being where people are. Chaplaincy is just one example. Nationally our church needs to ensure it is organised to encourage us to be more outward looking. We must also build on our lockdown learning about how interested people can be in church, when we find new ways of being in touch with them.

Biblical Foundations – Where there is no vision.....

If we are successful in forging links with our communities, we must be clear about the message we bring which for me is the vision of Christ's Kingdom that we find at the heart of the Bible. I have always loved the Bible and in 1987 was licensed as a Reader. Preaching continues to be a joy - hopefully even for my hearers at times!

I believe that renewing our faith in our Biblical foundations will spur us on to tackle urgent issues we face in both the church and world:

- reminding us that there is one single humanity in the face of racism
- calling on us to safeguard the well-being of children and vulnerable people
- reminding us that we are called to be stewards not exploiters of our planet
- calling on us to reflect God's 'bias to the poor' in the face of inequalities in society made clearer than ever during the pandemic

Biblical foundations provide a basis for addressing key issues in a world and a church that have both lost old certainties and still struggle with longstanding debates:

- providing a framework for marriage and for all our relationships with each other
- helping us to see how we can best value and dignify the gift of life itself
- helping us to grasp even what it is that makes us human

What experience and skills would I bring to Synod?

After my history degree I trained as a social worker. My work was focused on our most vulnerable children and families. I worked for the Children's Society for 14 years and for Local Authorities for 20 years. As I went into management, I undertook a Masters' degree in management after which I became head of child Protection in one Local Authority and then head of children's social care in Wolverhampton.

My voluntary experience includes:

- I have been a school governor across both primary and secondary schools.
- I am a Trustee of the YMCA Black Country Group which provides a range of affordable housing, housing support and a range of family support services.

My experience of church governance and leadership includes:

- PCC (including as lay chair), Deanery and Diocesan Synods in Liverpool.
- Preaching and leading worship as a Reader for nearly 35 years.

My professional experience has been invaluable in understanding challenges in our society, and my experience of leading large multi-disciplinary organisations has equipped me to understand bodies like our national church and to contribute to decision-making about its future priorities and structure.