

SHEFFIELD EXHAM

CANDIDATE FOR GENERAL SYNOD

Dear Elector,

Thank you for taking time to read this election address.

I am seeking your first vote or a high preference vote.

With my best wishes, Sheff



ABOUT ME

I graduated from Bristol University in Theology and come from a family which has served the Church of England faithfully in both clerical and lay roles for many generations. I have held various posts in parishes around the country. I have lived in the Tyne Valley, on and off, for over 40 years. I attend St. John's, Grainger Street, Newcastle and St. Cuthbert's, Haydon Bridge, which I represent on the Deanery Synod.

My wife is a Speech Therapist and Churchwarden. We have 2 sons and 5 grandchildren. I was a teacher for thirty-eight years and now I am administrator of two allied charities: one provides additional funding for local schools and individual students and the other provides supported housing for elderly residents. For the last ten years I have sat (frequently as Chairman) on the Northumberland Educational Appeals Tribunal.

In matters of church life, I tend towards the traditional: I believe in the pre-eminence of scripture supported by tradition and reason, the threefold ministry of Bishops, Priests and Deacons, the centrality of Holy Communion in our worship and the other sacraments, including marriage, as traditionally understood.

I am in touch with the issues which this Diocese needs to address, and I would bring these to the attention of Synod, when appropriate.

WHAT GENERAL SYNOD NEEDS TO ADDRESS

This is a time of great challenge for the Church of England. It needs to concentrate on rebuilding itself as the ravages of the Covid pandemic begin to fade.

While it is the national issues that always hit the headlines: sexuality and marriage, environment, race etc, we need to have an overarching strategy to promote growth and re-establish our rightful place in our cities, towns, and villages.

In recent months many churches have worked tirelessly to bring comfort, both material and spiritual, to those who have been seriously affected by the pandemic.

But many churches have themselves suffered from loss of revenue, loss of key members, an ever-decreasing number of parish clergy and, sadly, a perceived lack of leadership and encouragement from above. There is considerable disillusion.

WHAT DOES GENERAL SYNOD NEED TO DO?

First, and this is vital, it needs to avoid factional differences and the blame game. One Church, one Faith, one Lord must be the enfolding message. In practical terms every member of General Synod must focus on the rebuilding.

Over-centralisation is not the answer: our parish priests are being spread ever more thinly and our communities are missing them. There is no substitute for local clergy who are involved and recognized in the street, in our schools, hospitals, businesses and voluntary organisations, as well as ministering to the faithful.

We all need to pray that our leaders will listen to the voices crying out for a positive message of hope and a campaign to inject new life into our parishes by coming up with imaginative and practical solutions. It is not just the dearth of clergy; many PCCs are struggling to fill vacancies.

On finance, I cannot claim to have any expertise in this area, but I am convinced that funds are not being used in the most effective way. What may work well in the commercial world is not necessarily appropriate in the Church.

Funds need to be directed where they will be of most value within parishes, not on ever increasing levels of management and consultancy far from the struggles of those who are striving to support the most disadvantaged.

The Church Commissioners have a duty to provide for the Church's mission in the most deprived communities but it is clear that funds are not always reaching the right places. General Synod will need to be rigorous in insisting that resources are not wasted.

REFORM AND RENEWAL

This initiative from 2015 called for a 50% increase in ordinations from 2020. This call must now be answered. The scheme to implement the ordination campaign must be put back on track urgently and given a high profile. I would support efforts to achieve this.

IN CONCLUSION

General Synod has many issues to tackle over the next five years. I would like to play my part in contributing in a positive way on behalf of our Diocese.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me via telephone number **01434 684239** or via email **sheffieldexham@outlook.com**

My prayers are with all candidates standing for election.