

Canon Izzy McDonald-Booth

Standing for re-election to the House of Laity of General Synod

Nominated by Carol Barclay, Lay Chair, Central Deanery

Seconded by Kay Plumley, Deanery Synod member, Central Deanery



About Me

I have lived in the North East for over 30 years. I worship at St George's Jesmond and live in Heaton. I am absolutely committed to Newcastle Diocese and am very active at Parish, Deanery, Diocesan and (during my term on General Synod) national level.

My path to being an 'active' church member was long, having grown up in a rural area of Gloucestershire and attended church since I was very young, my mother lost her faith and I made a decision to continue attending alone as a young teen. When I moved to Newcastle in the 90s, I was exploring my identity and was questioning my sexuality – which made finding a safe church difficult. I spent a good 10 years only attending at Christmas and Easter because I couldn't face the intrusion or the underlying homophobia. St George's became my home and one of the main reasons I feel able to commit myself to being part of a faith community. I am 49, married to Emma and am delighted and blessed to be in a church that could offer us a service of thanksgiving after our marriage.

I work at National Glass Centre, Sunderland, which is part of Sunderland University, and my job is Retail Manager for Craft and Design. Lucky for me this means I work with artists and crafts people every day – I studied glass and ceramics and love to spend my time making sure artists can make a living through sales of their work. I also teach business skills to arts undergraduates as part of my role. I have worked with the chaplain at the University to help convince senior management to open an Interfaith Centre on campus to serve all faiths. I am really proud that we can offer this to the University community.

I am passionate about the future of the Church of England and will work tirelessly to make sure our voices are heard from Newcastle. I want a church that welcomes everyone, that ensures no one has to hide at the back during services for months to discover that they would not be welcome, like I did.

Why Me for General Synod?

When I was elected to General Synod in 2015, I was aware that important decisions would need to be made during my term and despite frustrations huge amounts of progress has been made. I have participated and put myself forward in what have been painful discussions about sexuality and gender in particular.

I have spoken regularly (e.g about (housing) estates ministry and Anna Chaplaincy) and participated fully in General Synod and also been part of the team of people feeding back to

Deaneries. Some of this work has involved defending myself in front of the senior leadership of the church, which is terrifying but also a privilege.

I would love to serve a second term on General Synod to continue in this ongoing process because it's clear we're only part-way through the discussion.

I feel we have a responsibility to fight for inclusion, whilst still holding the hope that those with a different theology will come to the table and we can work together. Through Living in Love and Faith (LLF) I've learned to welcome and explore these issues with those who I profoundly disagree with, and it's made me a better person and listener for it. It's these skills I bring to the difficult task ahead that the CofE needs to tackle.

I love the CofE and I have been open about seeing it's future flourish for the whole of society. I believe we are all made in God's image and that is where I get my confidence and inner belief from. As a member of Inclusive Church, I believe that inclusiveness in all forms needs to be addressed in the church.

I long for the day when we don't have to discuss inclusion anymore and we can move onto the other important issues that the church needs to face up to like, attendance, finances, discipleship, safeguarding and the environment.

Leadership

I was recently nominated to be on the Panel of Chairs of Synod, which means I will be chairing General Synod debates if I am elected. In early 2021 I was appointed Chair of the House of Laity for Newcastle Diocese. I am a member of Bishop's Council (BC), which supports the work of the Bishop and her senior staff team.

I am also a member of Finance Committee (sub-committee of BC) which examines the finances of the diocese and sets out recommendations for BC to consider and vote upon. As part of the role on finance committee I have been invited to be a Trustee/Director of Newcastle Diocesan Society which acts as a custodian to properties and trust funds that belong to the Diocese and also looks after various PCC buildings, land and trust funds within the Diocese.

Wider Work

Working with St Michael's Lighthouse Project in Byker I started as a volunteer and am now a member of the steering group looking to redevelop this important building in the heart of Byker Wall Estate. Still hopeful in our fundraising efforts to get this long-term project delivered. I am currently a Diocesan Advocate for LLF, supporting deaneries and parishes to engage with the course and feedback to the House of Bishops. I chair Lindisfarne College of Theology (LCT) and work with the senior leadership and a board of trustees to ensure LCT is resilient, fit for purpose for the needs of our diocese now and into the future.

Thank you for reading my electoral statement, I hope you will give me your first preference vote. If you want to contact me about anything I would be very happy to hear from you.