

# Charles Houston: Candidate for House of Laity

## A Lay Reader with a heart for parish revival

Neen Sollars House, Cleobury Mortimer, DY14 0AH

Aged 61 yrs old

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Proposer: Roger Taylor, Bridgnorth Deanery

Seconder: Christopher Whitmey, Ledbury Deanery



I am offering myself to serve at the General Synod as I am passionate to see:

- the Church of England flourish and grow as we seek to communicate the Gospel of Jesus to our communities;
- the roll-out of lay leadership training throughout the parishes
- that church closures do not become the easy way out post Covid
- unity across the whole church

### PERSONAL DETAILS

I grew up in Herefordshire and after school, I joined the Army and was commissioned into the Coldstream Guards with whom I spent time in Germany interspersed with ceremonial duties in London and a tour of West Belfast.

After the army, I read Land Management at Reading University which led to me becoming a chartered surveyor and, apart from 10 years in renewable energy, I have been in property ever since.

In 1987 I married Emma from Lydbury North and shortly after that we moved to Shropshire establishing our home in Neen Sollars, where we brought up our family of four children.

I originally came to faith in 1985 when my brother dragged me along to a guest service at HTB, London and I enrolled on the next alpha course. The phrase “there must be more to life..” challenged me.

My other passions in life are tennis, painting and military history but I also enjoy cycling and travel.

### WHY I AM STANDING

- Helping to lead a small church in a rural area for 25 years has given me a bottom-upwards view of the Church of England and there have been times when I have struggled to feel that the parishes are fully understood by the upper echelons- I want to help Synod to appreciate that the well-being of the Church is inseparable from and dependent on the health of the individual parish.
- I believe that the Church should be outward-looking with a focus on serving the community, which creates openings for more organized evangelism such as Alpha – and that Sunday worship can be presented in a variety of ways provided that the core structure of CofE beliefs and the Gospel message are maintained. For instance, our open-air, lay-led services have been very successful. I would like Synod to promote and support a mind-set of simple parish-based mission.

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- I want the Church to look again at lay-leadership training; currently it takes three years to train a lay reader and this deters a lot of people who would otherwise be very effective at helping the clergy to take services. I would like every parish to have at least one person licensed to help lead worship and I will urge Synod to resource lay-leader training at the parish level.

AND FINALLY..

Covid has shown that those parishes which have a strong lay team flourish in adversity while those that don't, suffer. In one benefice near me three out of five parishes have not reopened post-Covid and hundreds of years of worship in these historic buildings has ceased. This is happening on our watch and I do not accept that it is inevitable. Now is not the time to be timid about addressing these irreversible changes – it is a time for taking steps to inspire, train and license leaders from the pews to share ownership of the worship in their communities with their clergy and this will be the message that I will take to Synod.

If you agree with some or even all of the above – please give me your vote and I will do my best to make a difference.

Thank you for reading this

Charlie Houston  
7<sup>th</sup> September 2021