

# General Synod Election Address 2021

**Candidate:** Debra Walker

**Proposer:** Geoff Almond

**Seconder:** Colin Throp



Dear Fellow Members of the House of Laity

I have served on General Synod since 2010 and am seeking re-election. The General Synod plays an important role both in our Church and National life, debating relevant issues and approving legislation and I have outlined below some of my own thoughts relating to several of these issues:

## **Vision and Strategy - Mission**

The Archbishop of York recently released his Vision and Strategy paper for the Church of England in the 2020s. The key theme is mission, with a church centred on Jesus and shaped by the 5 marks of mission. I welcome the vision of equipping the whole people of God to be missionary disciples, to have a church that encompasses all our traditions and one that better reflects the age and diversity of our communities. If we are to be faithful to our calling then this vision must be central to all our work as a Church.

## **Post COVID Church**

The last couple of years has changed our lives in so many ways. In addition to the personal tragedies and sense of loss, the pandemic has had a massive impact on the way we communicate and the way we work. Digital church has emerged and the church must now carefully examine how and where this new technology can be used to best effect to further our mission and promote inclusion of those who find it difficult or are unable to fully participate in church life, meetings, services and worship.

## **Human Sexuality and Identity - Living in Love and Faith (LLF)**

I have been privileged to participate in a number of facilitated conversations on this subject at both local and National level. My personal view is very straightforward in that we should be an inclusive church, one that is open and fully accepting of all people regardless of race, colour, ethnicity, ability, sexuality and identity. However, it is clear that others hold a more traditional view on some of these issues and as a matter of conscience do not wish to see any changes to current teaching, liturgy or practice relating to specific areas of sexuality. I honour and respect those, who as a matter of conscience, hold a well considered, different view to mine and I would look to find a way forward that honours all God's people, minimises ongoing hurt and frees us for mission. The church has previously grappled with many contentious issues, yet has managed to hold together in mutual respect and love.

## **Creation, Climate Change and the Environment**

As Christians we have a responsibility to care for creation and respond to climate change and its impact across the world. An important step towards this was a target set by General Synod for all parts of the church's work to become carbon 'net zero' by 2030. Some excellent resources are available via the National Church Environmental Campaign website and at Diocesan level and I would look to encourage both churches and commissioners to address these issues as part of their faith, practice and mission.

## **Education**

The education of our children is a key building block in our mission and growth strategy with research suggesting that the most devastating long term costs of the pandemic are likely to fall on today's children as they grow and develop. Some younger children have regressed in basic skills with lost learning resulting in further damage to qualifications and long term prospects.

Within such a difficult climate, our church schools play an even more important role in educating our children within a Christian environment to enable our children to flourish in the widest possible sense.

I am committed to promoting our church schools and colleges.

## **Finances**

The pandemic has impacted on the finances of individuals and companies throughout the world with poor families being the hardest hit by the pandemic's long economic fallout. The church has a duty to address injustice, care for the poor and promote a levelling up agenda.

Similarly, within the church we see a significant difference in Diocesan wealth across the Dioceses, with Liverpool having the least value of assets per capita. I support the work of the Mutuality in Finance Group, removing barriers to generosity, making it easier for Dioceses to support each other financially.

## **The World Wide Church**

I value our international relationships as part of the Anglican Communion. We have so much to be grateful for as we continue to learn from one another. I believe we make a difference when we stand together against injustice and persecution.

Closer to home, we need to be a humbler church, making space for dialogue with Christians of other denominations and wherever possible not be afraid to enter into pioneering partnerships to maximise our mission opportunities.

## **Personal Information**

I have recently retired from work as a Pharmacist working at Alder Hey Children's Hospital. I am involved in church life at Parish, Deanery, Diocesan and National level and am Chair of the House of Laity for Liverpool Diocese.

I am Chair of Trustees and mentor for the Tsedaqah Community, a missional community of young people from Liverpool, Ghana and the USA, living together in community for a year. The community work on a variety of social justice projects across Liverpool including the MICA food bank, raising awareness of human trafficking/modern day slavery and racial justice.

I am a school governor at my local church school and sing in my local church choir.

Thank you for reading my election address and I hope you will feel able to give me your first preference vote.

Whatever your decision, I pray God's blessing on us all and on the work of General Synod for the next quinquennium.