

General Synod Election 2021 Rochester Diocese – House of Laity

Fellow Christians,

I write to ask for your first preference, or your high preference vote in this election. Your vote carries weight so I urge you now to reflect with me on the priorities that I believe the General Synod should be engaged with over the next 5 years.

Christian Renewal and Church Growth

Through General Synod the voices of clergy and congregations up and down the country are heard in the national arena. As your representative I would hope to reflect the priorities and concerns of the diocese at large. I pray for a Christlike General Synod that faithfully and prayerfully seeks out God's vision for our growth and renewal in mission, discipleship and loving service.

Rochester Diocese

Although our diocese has not been spared the gradual erosion of church attendance, especially in the 18-40 age group, we have begun to see the fruits of national church investment in new approaches to developing worshipping communities. Many parishes have adapted well during lockdown, using digital media and live streaming; for others maintaining any semblance of regular worship or fellowship has been a struggle.

Why I got involved

I was brought up in a Christian family, went to youth camps and became a Christian in my teens after reading St John's gospel. I led Christian Union at college and medical school. My local church commitment has included home group and Alpha course leadership, PCC and Teaching & Worship Ministry Team.

As a family doctor for 35 years I have been privileged to share the challenges, the joys and the sorrows of life's journey with many people, both those with faith and those without. With a special interest in mental health care and GP training I have held various roles in clinical and professional governance. The insights I have gained have informed my contribution to synod when debating some of the pressing moral issues of our time.

A Broken Church

Safeguarding failures, abuse of power and the impact of the pandemic are testimony to our weakness. There is spiritual hunger in our country. As a repentant church we need to seek reconciliation with those wounded and restore hope.

Sharing the Good News

Reading the gospels it strikes me that Jesus first off met people at their point of need, responded to their material plight and engaged with them as a whole person; think of Bartimaeus, blind, or the 5000, hungry. Our Called Together priorities include supporting loving service in our local communities and I will continue to advocate similar initiatives at national level.

New Strategies for Ministry

"Setting God's People Free" has set out the vision of all church members, male or female, ordained or lay, licensed or not, to realize their full scope of sharing

in the evangelistic, pastoral and worshipping life of the church.

Caring for the Vulnerable

Christ calls us to look out for those in need, the marginalized and the oppressed. Churches have led with initiatives such as food banks, winter shelters and credit unions and we should continue to look for imaginative ways of aiding those facing poverty. Recent moves to revisit Assisted Dying legislation, placing vulnerable people at risk, may need to be debated again. I am committed to the hospice movement with its Christian roots, promoting holistic end of life care and generous support for carers. We should be vigilant in recognizing and opposing any plans that devalue human life or shortcut our responsibility to be a caring society. Our church should also lead in calling our nation to respond to the needs of migrants and refugees. We should be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit as to how we can be effective channels of Christ's love in their situation.

Caring for Our Clergy

Further review of the Clergy Discipline Measure is needed if we are to live up to our commitment to the clergy wellbeing covenant.

Keeping Doors Open

All God's people should feel welcome in their church. Repentance for misplaced prejudice to UK ethnic minorities and a call from our archbishops for "a radical new inclusion in the church" were endorsed by synod.

Sexual orientation, gender identity and issues about human conception and genetic manipulation are profoundly challenging for the Christian. In my professional life I have often held the hand of those who are contending with the personal misery and external alienation such issues may generate.

I believe that, as a church, we should be listening to God, through his word and the Holy Spirit, and to each other as we seek to gain understanding and respect for differing views.

God's Earth

We are custodians of an abundant planet and accountable to its creator for our stewardship of its resources and our legacy to future generations. Synod should continue to speak out in support of sustainable and environmentally friendly use of natural commodities.

Net zero carbon emissions by 2030 was a bold decision for the church to take and synod will need to act quickly to meet that target.

Please Vote

Call me, e-mail me or meet with me. I will be very happy to discuss my priorities with you.

Mike Lawes



Dr Mike Lawes

St James Church Tunbridge Wells

Lay Chair Tunbridge Wells Deanery Synod

Rochester Diocesan Synod

Living in Love and Faith Consultative Group

Member Christian Medical Fellowship

Career in General Practice

Formerly Director Crossways Community (Mental Health Care)

DIVERSITY not Division

UNITY without Uniformity

OPEN not Exclusive

IN COMMUNION not dissent

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