



Ms Julie Withers

Standing for re-election to General Synod

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Proposed by Katherine Hass (Kate) Bowdon Deanery. klhass@btinternet.com

Seconded by Chris Graham Bowdon Deanery. chris_graham@btinternet.com

Kate says "I believe you would be an outstanding member of General Synod. You have a wide experience of different forms of lay ministry. I have found you unafraid to speak your mind in balanced tones most likely to persuade and not to antagonise".

About me

I am standing for re-election to General Synod and am asking for your 1st preference or highest possible vote. I am grateful to Kate and Chris for their nomination.

I am retired (early!) after 38 years in a Wealth Management Company and 3 years in property management services. I was delighted to be elected to represent the Diocese on General Synod during the last term which was extended by an extra year due to the pandemic. I have thoroughly enjoyed the privilege of using my time, experience and enthusiasm to serve on General Synod. Getting to grips with how General Synod works takes time and I would love to continue representing our Diocese with the experience I have gained.

My Experience

In 2009 I was licensed as a Reader and prior to this I served as a Pastoral Worker. I take a keen interest in developments in the national Church, particularly regarding discipleship and lay ministry. I took a lead in involving our parish as a pilot for the Everyday Faith (formerly Setting God's People Free) initiative from the Renewal and Reform Group.

With the church's increasing reliance on volunteers and lay ministry, I am enthusiastic about lay training and seek always to encourage and foster fruitful discipleship. I have remained involved with the Foundations for Ministry Course since it began - as an administrator, group leader and latterly as centre leader at Hale.

Discipleship is key to the growth of our congregations and I am keen to do all that I can to support and encourage this. I long for growth, for every individual as they journey in faith, growing in confidence, and in the numbers of engaged Christians in our parishes, as the Gospel is shared and the love of Christ for everyone is demonstrated.

I am Lay Chair of Bowdon Deanery Synod. I was for several years Secretary of Knutsford Deanery Synod, so I am aware of some of the challenges facing the Church, both in rural areas and in the suburbs.

Part of my ministry has always been in the central functions of the Diocese, through Deanery and Diocesan committees which I see as key to supporting, equipping and encouraging our clergy and congregations.

I serve on Diocesan Synod and have been a member of Bishops' Council, the Vacancy in See Committee, the Diocesan Board of Patronage and the Committee for Ministry. I am also a member of the Diocesan Spirituality advisory group which supports the work of the Diocesan Prayer and Christian Spirituality Officer.

On important matters for the new Synod –

Mission

Mission is key to our existence; we are called to serve God in this. We have lost generations to reach with the Gospel and in spite of, (perhaps because of), the pandemic, we have exciting new opportunities to pursue as the church adapts and engages with people who have not yet heard about Jesus, but who have begun to ask big questions about life.

My work with Foundations for Ministry over the years has taught me about the richness and many varied blessings brought to our church by different traditions and churchmanship as well as different ages and experience. My hope is that the church will learn to creatively harness the strengths of our traditions as we work more closely together in Mission.

Racial Justice

The church has still got a lot of work to do on this and I support the essential work of the Racial Justice Commission. I was sorry that it was decided not to appoint Racial Justice Officers and I hope the new General Synod will reconsider this matter.

Climate Change

I voted for the decision for the church to be carbon neutral by 2030. I fully appreciate the challenges of this but support the need to do everything possible in this increasing emergency. We need to work with the scientists and advisers who can help us with the practicalities of managing and adapting our buildings and policies. If everyone of us does what we can, even just one small thing, it must surely help. As stewards of creation, we must do all that we can to protect our beautiful planet.

Living in Love and Faith (LLF)

I hope that through engagement with LLF and the Pastoral Principles, our church may be better equipped to listen to one another and work better together whilst listening to and accepting difference. I am part of the Diocesan Advocates' group supporting engagement with this.

Inclusion

Building an inclusive welcome is important to me. I see it as essential for the church's future mission. I am therefore committed to equality for everyone, at all levels and roles within the church, regardless of stage of faith journey, gender, disability, ethnicity, socio-economic status, mental health or sexuality.

Clergy Wellbeing

The Clergy Discipline Measure was discussed at the last meeting of General Synod and remains "unfinished business". I see it as imperative that our hard-pressed clergy are properly supported and want to see this measure clarified and simplified.

Simpler, humbler, bolder

I support the Archbishop of York's vision for the Church of England. I see the merit of church planting for growth, but believe that oversight and discretion of this must remain with the local parish leadership and relate well to the parish system. Mission through church planting has to be appropriate for the culture of the locale if the Gospel is to be properly heard.

A final comment from Chris Graham

Chris says "I strongly commend Julie as a brave and inspiring leader who combines her work on General Synod with close involvement in parish, deanery, and diocesan affairs. Julie displays an openness to new approaches and a principled commitment to justice and inclusion. The next Synod will need people with Julie's imagination and drive. Julie gets my first preference vote"

If you would like further information before reaching a decision on where to place me in the vote, please contact me on 07980 205261 or by email jh.withers@gmail.com