

Liz Olsen

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Background

I came to faith as a teenager in my hometown of Sale. I trained as a Speech Therapist and then moved to Wirral in 1972, and worked as a Speech Therapist for Liverpool Area Health Authority. I started worshipping at St Mary's Church, Upton.

During that time the Lord called me to the ministry of Bible Translation with Wycliffe Bible Translators. I went to serve with them in Mali, West Africa, in 1981, with St Mary's sending me out as my home supporting church. In Mali I was part of a team that translated the New Testament into one of the local languages. We completed this in 1994, when I moved to Nairobi, Kenya to teach at Pan Africa Christian College (then University) on their Bible and Translation degree. In 2000 I became head of the Translation Department.

In 2010 I joined the newly-formed modular training programme for translators in Francophone and Anglophone Africa, developing courses for translation and translation-related ministries. I became based back in England and made trips to teach these courses in French in Burkina Faso and Cameroon, and in English in Kenya.

I retired in 2016 and since then have become more involved in the ministry of St Mary's.

Relevant Work Experience

My time in Africa has been an enriching experience which has given me insight into various matters.

- **Different cultures and religions.** In Africa I developed some insight into different cultures and their complexity. I know that there is not just one way of doing things, that there are different ways of looking at issues, and hope to bring this with me as I consider issues discussed in General Synod, if elected. I also gained some understanding of different religions, mainly African Traditional Religion and, to a lesser extent, Islam, and found a respect for those who hold to these beliefs. Nevertheless it has deepened my conviction that *'Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved'*. Acts 4:12
- **Different Churches.** As a Christian I have experience of different church traditions, worshipping in a Protestant Evangelical church in Mali and a Baptist church in Kenya. The university where I taught is Pentecostal. So I bring with me insights, both positive and negative, from these different traditions as well as from the Church of England.
- **Poverty.** In Mali I lived alongside some of the poorest people in the world in a village situation, and came to respect them for their resilience under hardship, especially in the mid-1980s when there was a severe drought and famine. I also learned to live without electricity, running water or drainage myself. I was humbled by the poorer Christians, both in Mali and Kenya, who have truly learned what it is to rely on the Lord for daily necessities. All this has made me deeply grateful for the Lord's provision and for the many privileges we enjoy in the West, while at the same time deploring the huge gap between the rich and the poor in this country.

- **Passion for the Word of God.** As a Bible translator I have learnt how to dig out the author's intended meaning in a passage of the Bible, for it is only when understanding its meaning that one can attempt to translate it. I have gained a deep respect for God's Word and for a careful and prayerful reading of it. Without it I have seen strange beliefs creeping into churches, so I am more convinced than ever that every church and Christian needs the Bible and needs to know how to read it aright and apply it to daily life.

Church Involvement

Now that I am back with St Mary's Church I lead Bible studies and have taken part in leading prayer meetings, assisting in the Alpha course and leading a course on Biblical Cultures so that people can read the Bible in its own setting and thus understand it better. I am on the PCC, after serving as its minute secretary for 5 years. I also regularly staff the reception desk, helping the administration and also welcoming people, helping them feel at home and endeavouring to give them a positive impression of Christians and, hopefully, of Jesus.

Issues I relate to

Because I am passionate about the Bible and because my life in Africa has given me insight into certain issues I have an interest in various topics that I think will occupy the General Synod in the next five years. For example:

- The Lord has a heart for the **poor and refugees**, in **justice and mercy**, and I have seen poverty at first hand, so will be interested in being involved in issues to do with **poverty and social justice**, including **modern slavery and human trafficking**.
- Similarly I will want to be involved in **ethical issues** such as making ethical investments.
- The Bible speaks about **marriage and family values** and I would like to see discussion on **human sexuality** taking place in the context of what the Bible says about this. I believe traditional marriage and family life is the bedrock of society. As a single, I also relate to the unique concerns of those called to a single life.
- The Bible also talks about **caring for creation** so I am glad that the Church is working towards being net carbon zero by 2030 and will want to involve myself in this issue.
- I want to see the **Church growing stronger**. In Africa the church is growing, despite persecution in places, and needs support. I would love to see more growth in the West also. This can only be done if we are relevant to modern society, which, I believe is longing for something deep, strong and permanent in this troubled world. We have the answer, but people are not seeing it, and the answer is not to water down our beliefs, but to celebrate them in vibrant, heartfelt worship, solid Bible teaching, and living out our faith in our daily life.

In conclusion, I hope that you will give me a high priority when you vote. The future of the Church of England is crucial and I will strive to do all I can to ensure that it remains a true Church of God, teaching Biblical truths. Please do contact me by email or phone (see top of statement) if you wish to ask any questions or discuss any issues.

Proposer: Graham Morris North Wirral Deanery
 Secunder: David Richards Middlewich Deanery