

## **QUESTION ONE**

**What is your vision of lived-out inclusion, with specific regard to gender, gender identity and sexuality, in our church both nationally and locally?**

*Andrew ATTWOOD*

Jesus Christ's radical inclusion for all, models for Christians a broad and loving church welcome, regardless of background, gender identity or orientation. Christ's radical call to believe and change also models for all of us the step-by-step need to submit to his ways and word, in the context of God's loving family, receiving a new identity in Christ which goes beyond all other categories. These two radical and counter-cultural characteristics are necessary for everyone in church both locally and nationally.

*Stella BAILEY*

Jesus reminds us that no one seeking to do the Lord's work is an outsider. Repeatedly, Jesus' words rebuke us when we turn against others because they are different. He warns us against simplistic solutions to complex problems. The truth is always bigger than any one person's, or any one group's grasp of it. Jesus cautions us against inflexibility of thought. He helps us re-learn that diversity is not only good; it is essential for the health of the Body of Christ. Therefore, I hold an open and fully inclusive view and believe churches should be transparent when they don't.

*Mark BRATTON*

My vision is of a world where people are liberated to live fully out the wellsprings of their own identity, and integrity, and to experience the fullness of life that Jesus came to bring. This entails a church environment where people feel confident to embrace worship life and ministry wholeheartedly, without prejudice, deficit, or compulsion, because of their sexual orientation or chosen gender identity. The Church should be a place people feel able to live easily within their skin in an atmosphere of love and mutual acceptance as ones made in the image of God and members of Christ's Body.

*Kay DYER*

Locally, as a parish church for a town, we have twenty-five or more traditional (man and woman) weddings and numerous couples who come for renewal of wedding vows at silver or golden wedding anniversaries. Also, within our regular attendance on a Sunday morning we have same sex female couples with children and same sex male couples worshipping with us. Nationally it would probably depend on the size of church and its location, as some rural areas are more conservative compared to cities where LGBTQ people could feel more welcome in C of E Churches.

*Jonathan JEE*

The dynamic of grace is affirmation followed by challenge. Jesus welcomes all who come to him, but then challenges all to repentance and faith. I long for the church, both locally and nationally, to do both of these well. We need to demonstrate a genuine welcome to everyone, regardless of race, sex, orientation, age or culture. But then we also need to challenge all to follow Jesus wholeheartedly, including his demanding sexual ethics. If the challenge is given too early, it is heard as rejection. But if the challenge never comes, that is not the way of Jesus.

*Kate MASSEY*

I hope that my election statement has given a good flavour of my passion for inclusion and my personal stance on what that might look like in terms of gender, gender identity, sexuality and other characteristics which have historically left some Christians marginalised within their church. As I also say in my statement, I am committed to engaging with the Living in Love and Faith process, and so believe that a vision of lived-out inclusion is one we must journey towards together. I hope I can contribute prayerfully and well to the development of that vision.

*Claire McARTHUR*

My theology is that we are all made in the image of God, and should be accepted and welcomed for who we are, both at the local and national level. I am fully signed up to the inclusive church and hope for a church that celebrates and affirms every person and does not discriminate. Everyone has a right to flourish in their life, to lead their best life in Christ, to embrace their unique individual identity, gifts and talents given to them. If successful on synod I will be a voice that will challenge where discrimination is present.

*Stephen PARKER*

As I said in my Election Address, I believe in a radical inclusivity - that everyone is made in the image of God, and thus deserving of authentic welcome and love in our churches, both locally and nationally. The Church I serve holds a diverse congregation, including members of the LGBT+ community. I am convinced that there is an honoured place for everyone around the Lord's Table; independent of their gender, gender identity, and sexuality - the Good News of Jesus Christ and the love of God is for everyone.

## **QUESTION TWO**

**In seeking to represent diocesan clergy at General Synod, what examples can you share of having been an effective colleague and representative within your own deanery chapter and synod?**

*Andrew ATTWOOD*

I meet twice most months with a group of Anglican leaders, for accountability and inspiration for mission, and have been involved in many fruitful Learning Communities and Leader Huddles. I've been very pleased to represent those who are faithful to the scriptures. I have not attended Chapter or Deanery Synod for some time, as a colleague made it clear to me (during several exchanges) that they did not believe Jesus died for our sins. This situation has sadly made shared mission impossible. I have sought help from the bishop on this matter.

*Stella BAILEY*

The Deanery is an important lynch pin in the synodical structure and enabling us to encounter the broader diversity of what it means to be Anglican, enabling clergy and laity to engage with others who worship and understand scripture differently to us. I see the Deanery as the place where we can enter into relationship and conversation with others in a way that stops us 'othering' them. As Area Dean I have been fully engaged with the deanery and walk alongside supporting clergy and laity (especially those in vacancy) so that we can build Gods Kingdom together.

*Mark BRATTON*

As Area Dean of Coventry (South), I revitalized the Clergy Chapter, which had previously met infrequently, and with low turnout, offering hospitality in my home, and fostering a stronger spirit of collegiality. On the strength of improved relationships, the Deanery was transformed from being a net recipient of Diocesan funds to a net contributor. The Deanery Synod was also rejuvenated, meeting regularly in the Warwick University Chaplaincy, with good speakers, and a high turnout of Deanery Synod members.

*Kay DYER*

I was for many years a mentor with Growing Healthy Churches and visited several rural churches as well as supporting my town centre church with advice, advocacy, and encouragement, in their varied situations. Recently I have not only provided services for the urban congregation I usually care for but have travelled to adjoining deaneries to provide Easter Holy Communion or Sunday morning services for churches in interregnum or to cover illness in the local clergy. This keeps me in touch with a wider cross section of the Christian community when I represent them at Bishop's Council.

*Alison EVANS*

I enjoy working with my deanery colleagues and have been keen to encourage us to work together where we can. For example, 6 months ago I asked whether there was a way we could collaborate in preparing material and encouraging youth leaders. Through a Growing Faith pilot we are at the early stages of working out what that will look like. As in every deanery there are differences in our theology, but that doesn't have to hinder us working together. I worked closely with my Society colleague on deanery to present a session for the deanery on Parish Share and [word limit reached].

*Jonathan JEE*

I have always sought to bring a wider perspective to our local deanery chapter and synod. I have been very involved with Churches Together in Leamington locally, and with New Wine nationally, and have sought to tell clergy colleagues locally about what is happening in the wider church. I have also taken local questions and perspectives to the leadership nationally, and sought to influence the decisions made at that level. If elected to General Synod, I will try to continue this 2-way dynamic.

*Kate MASSEY*

Since ordination, I have been a committed member of my deanery chapter and synod. I served on Nuneaton DMPC for five years and was Acting Area Dean during a time of vacancy. I have supported colleagues, participated in cover for services and occasional offices, helped parishes recruit new clergy who have been a blessing to our wider deanery, and coordinated deanery events like synods and licensings. I was instrumental in helping our deanery develop a sense of vision and ambition regarding parish share. I am currently helping our DMPC identify potential new worshipping communities as part of our deanery plan.

*Claire McARTHUR*

I pray that I am an effective colleague through my unique gifts and experience. I am Chair of the House of Clergy, recently I represented several colleague's concerns around the new diocesan strategy and management of. I sit on the clergy wellbeing group. I helped steer us through the mire of GDPR and continue to offer advice on all things digital. At a national level I wrote to +Tim Thornton consulting on the CDM revision, attended a discussion on the Archbishops' Anti-Racism Taskforce and another on the churches vision with ++Stephen. I also regularly pray with and for my colleagues.

*Stephen PARKER*

During my time in this Diocese, I have served on Diocesan Synod, as the Acting Area Dean for Warwick and Leamington, and have recently been elected to Bishop's Council. In serving the Diocese on a wider scale I have been an active member of the Acceler8 project since my arrival in Coventry Diocese in 2016. I hope that I have played a full and active part in the life of both my chapter and the wider Diocese and have actively sought out opportunities to play my part in the synodical structures that govern our common life together.

### **QUESTION THREE**

#### **How will the Hubs offer effective support to rural churches?**

*Andrew ATTWOOD*

The virtual learning platform for the Diocese will offer remote input to all including rural areas, but more could be done to link with the particular needs of rural parishes. Isolation is often felt more keenly in the countryside, and the mission hubs will need to be developed with this aspect in mind. Like the monastic Ministers of old, mission teams may be needed to be sent out to support and revitalise church in rural contexts.

*Stella BAILEY*

The route of this question is a mixture of a Diocese issue and nationally. On the surface the hubs will not help rural churches because of how SDF grants are allocated nationally and is the weakness of the current system of funding which only allows SDF money to go to the main population area of the Diocese. I would hope to spotlight this problem. The diocese has recognised this, and funds are being made available for one of the hubs to be rural focused, creating learning opportunities and partnership working rather than direct practical help on the mission field.

*Mark BRATTON*

The Hubs could offer effective support to rural churches by: (i) Recognising that many of these churches are largely liberal catholic in theology, and broad church in worship style, with natural, longstanding links with the local community, and thus fertile seedbeds for mission; (2) Acknowledging that, by all measures, 'levelling down' ministerial provision to these churches has been disastrous strategically and financially; and (3) Resolving to increase ministerial provision to these churches, admitting that many more labourers are required in the vineyard to reap the harvest

*Kay DYER*

Living in the south of the Diocese I am aware of how distant people can feel from Coventry and the decision-making processes in the Diocese. Hubs would offer rural churches an opportunity for church wardens, parish secretaries and congregations to get together and have a louder voice when financial, staffing, and other changes are being proposed. These would also offer economy of scale, as resources could be shared across a wider area, keeping the costs of running churches down and relieving pressure on overstretched clergy.

*Alison EVANS*

Training, Teams, and Encouragement. Hubs could make a big difference in inspiring mission if done in the right way. One of the difficulties for smaller churches and rural communities is availability of resources - children work springs to mind. What if the Hubs could bring the one or two children's leaders from each church together for equipping and encouragement? And this could be applied in many other areas of church life. Hubs could invest in the churches linked with them, but humility and partnership are essential.

*Jonathan JEE*

With respect, this question is not really relevant to General Synod, but needs to be addressed at a diocesan level. Having said that, there is a growing vision at St. Paul's in Leamington to build good partnerships with village churches in our area, and to share our experience and resources with them. Several of our people have been called to serve smaller churches locally, and I hope that we can build on this more intentionally if we become one of the Mission Hub churches.

*Kate MASSEY*

This is a good question and one which is being taken seriously by the hub teams and those involved in developing the Diocesan Growth strategy. However, it is more a question to be put to our local Diocesan Synod and I would encourage the questioner to ask it there. With regard to the National Vision, there was a recent webinar looking at how the vision would look in rural contexts, and there should be a recording available soon at: <https://www.churchofengland.org/about/leadership-and-governance/emerging-church-england/vision-church-england-2020s>

*Claire McARTHUR*

The hubs will be built as a resource for all churches both in the rural and urban environment, their location has been chosen to reflect this diversity. By sharing best practice, relevant timely information, through mentoring and sharing skills they will aim to enhance and support what is happening locally. This can only be achieved by the hubs understanding the pressures and uniqueness of rural ministry. As a trustee of, I pray that they will embrace the support offered by organisations such as the Arthur Rank Centre, an advocate for rural ministry, to aid their work.

*Stephen PARKER*

Having listened to the road shows that Archdeacon Barry used to present this new strategy my understanding is that they will seek to offer support to churches in their area by providing resources in the form of experience and expertise, training, and personpower to help other churches to realise their full potential and grow the kingdom in their context. I hope this will be effective in supporting those rural churches near to each of the Hub's. I believe firmly that our rural churches need support – that is a national issue, and one that General Synod needs to take seriously.