

I would like to offer myself to serve the Diocese of Coventry, and the wider church, in standing for election to General Synod.

I was ordained in 1988, and have been in parish ministry ever since: I was a curate in Chesterfield, a Team Vicar in Hinckley for 8 years, and I have been the Vicar of St. Paul's in Leamington for the last 21 years. By God's grace, I have been privileged to see slow, steady, unspectacular growth in all these churches down the years.



In many ways, I would much rather give my time to local church ministry than to General Synod! But I have sensed God calling me to stand, and offer my experience to the wider church at this critical stage in the life of our church and nation. I love the Church of England, despite the many frustrating things about it. My father was a country vicar, and the Lord called me to be ordained while I was a student, through being part of a vibrant church which gave me a vision for healthy church ministry and growth.

I still believe that God wants his church to flourish. Jesus said, "I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it". I am confident that the Lord wants to bless the Church of England, and to use us – together with all the other churches – to reach our nation once again with the good news of Jesus. But I also believe that if that is to happen, we need to stay faithful to the scriptures, to love one another, and to follow the leading of his Holy Spirit.

It is vital that the General Synod makes decisions and allocates resources to support, equip and resource the work of local churches. If elected, I will do all I can to make sure that the ministry and mission of the local church remains central in Synod's debates and decision.

### **Other responsibilities (alongside being Vicar of St. Paul's, Leamington)**

- Assistant Area Dean for Warwick & Leamington
- Chair of the Coventry Diocese Evangelical Fellowship (*while not a fan of labels, I see myself as an evangelical with a "generous orthodoxy" – 'orthodox' because I hold to the authority of scripture in all matters of faith and doctrine, and 'generous' because I seek to live out that mixture of grace and truth that we see perfectly in Jesus*)
- Previously Chair of Churches Together in Leamington (*For 11 years I hosted a monthly prayer meeting for church leaders from all churches in the town. During this time we saw various inter-church ministries develop including Foodbank, CAP, Streetpastors, & several others*)
- I am a member of Diocesan Synod and Bishop's Council, and a governor at our church school
- Previously captain of the Coventry Diocesan Cricket & Golf Teams (*some would say my most important responsibilities, though sadly without much success!*)

### **Family**

I have been married to Juliet for 32 years. We have 5 adult children (3 married) and 3 young grandchildren so far. Our greatest joy has been seeing our children choose to follow Jesus themselves, though the path to this has not been entirely straightforward!

## **What are some of the issues facing Synod, and what do I think about them?**

### **• Church Planting**

As I hope is already clear, I am committed to parish ministry. I have seen that church health leads to church growth, and I would like to see that growth overflow into the planting of new expressions of church, alongside the parish church. Our own church at St. Paul's was planted nearly 150 years ago to reach a new area of housing, and we need to plant new churches today to reach new people in new places in new ways.

### **• LLF**

There are many complex areas in LLF, and every year seems to bring new situations for us to deal with. Everyone is made in God's image and deserves our love and respect. And all of us need to hear Jesus' call to repentance and faith. Where the scriptures are clear, we must trust and obey. It is often a narrow road. But where the scriptures are not clear, we need to listen carefully to each other and the Holy Spirit. But we must not "ordain any thing that is contrary to God's word written" (article XX).

### **• Race**

The recent report "From lament to action" sets out many ways in which we need to change as local churches and as a national church, and our nation needs us to model how we can live together so much better. One goal must be to show the beauty of a church that includes people from every culture in our area. We have a long way to go in this area at St. Paul's – while we have people from many different nationalities in our church, that is not yet seen enough in our leadership or staff, and we are working on addressing this.

### **• Safeguarding**

There have been some terrible high-profile cases of abuse from all wings of the church (eg Peter Ball & John Smythe), and we have become aware that far more people have suffered abuse than we previously knew. God's love demands that we do all we can to make our churches to be safe places where everyone can encounter the grace of God through Jesus. In our church we have a safeguarding group that meets regularly, and we need to find ways to help every church and all our schools and institutions to take our responsibilities seriously, without loading churches down with impossible amounts of red-tape and regulation.

### **• Post-pandemic mission to the nation**

My passion is to see people of all ages come to faith in Jesus. There is a new openness in our society to prayer and to God, and we have a wonderful opportunity to proclaim the gospel to our nation again, and to show God's love in new and creative ways. I have 33 years of parish experience in seeing churches grow, to the point where St. Paul's is now a large church with a lot of children and young people, and adults of all ages. We have had to make difficult decisions about how to do things differently over the years, so that we are not stuck in old ways of doing things that God is no longer blessing. I am keen to help the national church to take these difficult decisions to release us to be much more effective in our mission to the whole nation.

## **What do others say about me?**

Rev Barry Jackson, Rector of Edgehill Churches (proposer): *"Jonathan has a wide range of experience in church leadership. I know him to be a good listener and I've seen him engage sensitively in conversations with people from a wide variety of ecumenical backgrounds. He is committed to following Jesus and to seeing the church released more fully in mission. I'm confident he would be a valuable member of General Synod."*

Rev Becky Jones, Vicar of St. Mary's Leamington (seconder): *"Jonathan has valuable leadership experience to bring to General Synod. He has a clear passion for releasing mission and ministry in the years ahead and his grounding in the Word and Spirit give me confidence that he will serve with diligence, biblically & prayerfully."*

## **How to contact me if you want to know more**

I hope that all this has given you a flavour of how I will approach being on General Synod, if elected. If you would like to know any more, please don't hesitate to get in touch. I would be grateful for your support in the election, either as your first choice candidate, or second or third.

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