

## QUESTION ONE

**In the light of the General Synod's commitment to net zero by 2030, how would you engage with the ongoing discussions on the church's investment in fossil fuel companies?**

*Rachel ATKINSON*

I am delighted that, in recent times, the church has made a commitment to tackling the urgent issue of climate change. I fully support this commitment as part of the church's stewardship of creation. As regards the church's investment policy – I would want to follow this debate carefully, as investors have significant power to influence policy. I am keen to see the church use their investments to positively influence policy in quickly moving towards a greener future, or - failing this objective being met - to withdraw their investments, offering clear reasons for this decision.

*Gill FRIGERIO*

I question whether the strategy of influencing fossil fuel companies through investment is sufficiently effective in the light of their 'greenwashing'. A prophetic church would at some point move our investments elsewhere. Synod needs to honour previous agreements to disinvest. We are in danger of lending legitimacy to a broken model unless we move our money, nationally and locally. This has understandably been a national focus but let's not forget the net zero challenge for parishes too, especially those with older buildings and less resource. Let's look at investment, mission and stewardship in the round at deanery and diocesan level.

*Will JONES*

It's very important to take care of God's creation and renewable energy has an important part to play in that. However, my feeling is that the General Synod's commitment to Net Zero by 2030 was somewhat rash in light of the current state of technology and may threaten the viability of our churches. In terms of investment in fossil fuels, I think fossil fuels continue to be an important part of our energy mix (eg we'll still need gas for a while yet) so I would not see value in penalising the companies which provide this fuel for us.

*Sam MARGRAVE*

By continuing to call for the Church to play its part in tackling climate change: I've argued Commissioners use investments to challenge big business to do more and voted for 2030 Net Zero Carbon Target.

I met with Church Commissioners a lot. I also engage with the Ethical Advisory Group. We can use our share holdings to attend AGMs and demand more.

We should invest in our buildings. But any plan must be backed up with funding to enable parishes to install cost reducing insulation and renewables.

We must do more as Christians to put pressure on community leaders too.

*Kim MORGAN-JONES*

As Christians we have a responsibility to care for the whole of God's creation and also to be good stewards of all that He has given us. This includes finances. In recent years the Church of England has begun to invest the portfolio in more ethical ways, but there is still work to be done in this area. I understand that the Ethical Investment Advisory Group have gone some way to addressing this issue and would welcome the opportunity to discuss their work with them if invited to do so.

*Claire RUSSELL*

Reaching net zero by 2030 is not going to be an easy target to achieve, and will require dedication and commitment at all levels of the church. I think it is essential that we spend time listening, particularly to those with specific knowledge and expertise in this area, and that where investments can be moved away from fossil fuel companies, without jeopardising the returns provided for the sustaining of the churches work across the country, then I would hope to be involved in discussions around how this can happen quickly and effectively.

*Phil SEWARDS*

I understand that the General Synod voted in 2018 to divest from all energy companies not on track to meet the Paris Agreement targets (keeping average global temperature increases to “well below” 2°C) by 2023. I *believe* that progress is being made, but I think that more regular information is required and I would push for this. Particularly, we need evidence that energy companies are complying (or on target to comply). Locally, I would like to see parishes supported in embracing renewable energy. My own parish invested in a ground source heat pump five years ago.

## **QUESTION TWO**

**What do you think of the recommendations in the ‘Lament to Action’ report, in particular the proposed diocesan Racial Justice posts, which have since been vetoed by Archbishops Council?**

*Rachel ATKINSON*

I welcome the *Lament to Action* report, and am very pleased that steps are being taken to tackle the evil of racism within the church. In our own church, we are seeking to address this issue at a local level, and so I am personally invested in engaging with this debate. In general terms I support the recommendations of the report, and would be very keen to see them actioned in such a way that racial justice becomes a reality at a local level, within individual churches and parishes.

*Gill FRIGERIO*

The report found that we are good at talking about addressing racism within the church but bad at doing anything. I support the findings: the task force now need senior leadership to back their recommendations. I can understand that funding diocesan posts might not be the best use of scarce resources or mechanism for change. However, it was proposed for good reason and we should go back to the report’s thinking to work up alternatives. Revealing their veto through questions at synod was underhand and insulting. I’d be pushing for some real action at synod and on the ground.

*Will JONES*

From Lament to Action is certainly well-intentioned and I agree with the importance of ending racism in our churches. However, the report makes a number of recommendations that I think many would agree are not sensible or realistic. Diocesan Racial Justice posts have rightly been identified as not a good use of limited church funds.

*Sam MARGRAVE*

I welcome the report but disagree with Archbishops Council refusal to fund recommendations. Recommendations weren't radical, like BLMs call to defund the police or toxic arguments about statutes. After Panorama, it's clear, we have a problem. If we can find the money to fund two Chapels the Archbishops don't use (instead using a Kitchen) or spend millions on chauffeurs or a £23.5m new Library. We can invest in tackling racism and reaching out to the whole community of God. I've worked hard to raise issues of racial justice as a General Synod member and would continue to ask tough questions.

*Kim MORGAN-JONES*

As mentioned in my address, I believe that we need a culture change across our churches from exclusion to welcome and inclusion of people currently underrepresented in our congregations. I welcome the recommendations in the 'Lament to Action' report and, in particular, fully support our new Diocesan Intercultural Mission Enabler. Having worked with the postholder for the last two years I have no doubt that he will be excellent in this role and will share his experience and expertise across our churches.

*Claire RUSSELL*

I think 'Lament to Action' is a difficult read, and is testament to how we as a church have repeatedly failed in our duty to ensure racial justice within the church. The report makes a broad range of recommendations across the five priority areas of which the proposed, centrally funded racial justice posts is one. If, indicated to General Synod in July, this is not financially viable, then I think it is important that each diocese looks to how the other recommendations can be acted upon. I welcome our own diocesan appointment of a Intercultural Mission Enabler in this diocese.

*Phil SEWARDS*

I agree with the Taskforce's February [2021] update (page 7 of 'From Lament to Action'). I was surprised that the Racial Justice posts were vetoed on cost grounds, which looks like a failure in Terms of Reference given to the Taskforce (though I'm not *completely* in support of those posts). There is much in the report to be commended and I would like to see some recommendations (especially in the Participation, Education and Training & Mentoring elements) implemented immediately. Again, I think we need to see evidence of progress. Each Diocese should have an implementation plan which is visible.

### **QUESTION THREE**

**How do you see the church here moving forward with Living in Love and Faith (LLF)?**

*Rachel ATKINSON*

There needs to be extremely careful listening to the breadth of views on this issue, and a commitment to prayerful reflection. Given my background in theological education, I am passionate to see robust theological thinking being central to the debate. I am keen to ensure that local discussions are appropriately and adequately fed back in order to inform the discussion as we move forward. I long to see this debate handled with both 'grace and truth' (John 1:14), and, whatever the outcome, for thoughtful pastoral provision to be made for people who hold a range of different perspectives.

*Gill FRIGERIO*

I hope that we will continue to engage with respect for those who have graciously shared their experiences of marginalisation and prejudice through the resources. I foresee that we will surface a wide range of sincerely held positions and that theological justification for same-sex marriage will be heard in the mainstream. My prayer is that we will have the courage to change and will listen to all, not just the loudest voices. I'd like to see us move in the short term to a position where clergy or parishes are able to follow their conscience in blessing same-sex marriages.

*Will JONES*

I think it's fair to say LLF is a project primarily wanted by those who want to see change in the church's teaching on marriage. I would not want to see a move away from the current biblical teaching. The process should be engaged in respectfully and with careful listening, but I would be clear that changing teaching or practice would not be wise or biblically faithful.

*Sam MARGRAVE*

In 2016 the CofE spent millions discussing sex but not moving forward.

While Bishops burn down the house, Church political groups are arguing over who can hold the fire extinguisher. We need reconciliation and dialogue. We must put out the fire.

General Synod was told LLF was a teaching document, not a process.

ABCs now want a decision by 2022; without proper resourcing or clear direction for those engaging.

It's not clear how laity can make views known at the end of reflection or how the House of Bishops will consider responses.

So, we need answers, a plan, and milestones.

*Kim MORGAN-JONES*

LLF is one of several important subjects which require our time and attention. I think that the timeframe for engagement with LLF has been ambitious, as it will take time for members of our churches to fully engage with the subject and course materials. In terms of practical ways to move forward with LLF, it would be good to give ourselves a more generous timeline, if possible, to ensure proper discussion and feedback can take place.

*Claire RUSSELL*

The pandemic has come at a difficult time for this process, making some of the in-person discussions and course participation harder to organise/access. I'm also not entirely sure how aware the wider church is of LLF, having received a number of questions relating to what it actually is over the last few weeks. I think we need to see much greater engagement in the process, because without that we risk any proposed change/lack of change to the church's current position being seen as something that is imposed rather than something that has been worked through together in community.

*Phil SEWARDS*

I have some concerns about the process (engagement during 2021, decision-making in 2022), given the continuing uncertainties raised by the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic; the LLF website recognises this is an issue, but says no more about it. I do think that addressing the impact of the pandemic on local communities and individuals should be first and foremost in our minds: this is the time for the people of our nation to hear afresh our message of hope and certainty, forgiveness of sins and salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord.

## QUESTIONS FOUR

### Where do you stand in relation to same sex marriages and blessings in church?

*Rachel ATKINSON*

I welcome and value all people as image bearers of God, and long for the church to be a place where all feel welcomed and valued by God. Whilst I recognise the wide range of views on same sex marriages and blessings, my personal position is that I hold to the current C of E position that marriages recognised by the church are those between one man and one woman.

*Gill FRIGERIO*

I stand firmly in favour of full marriage equality for any couple who wish to sanctify their loving commitment to one another in church. That is my prayerfully considered and theologically informed position but I recognise that compromise and small steps will be required to journey together. I have seen members of my own family massively shift position on this issue in recent decades through their experience of loving and living with gay relatives and that gives me hope for us all, in the long run.

*Will JONES*

I agree with the Church of England's teaching on marriage, which is that it is between a man and a woman, in accordance with scripture and the teaching of Christ. I do not think this should be changed, and blessing something which is not regarded as acceptable in scripture would not be congruent with that (since blessing indicates approval).

*Sam MARGRAVE*

Prayerfully I've been open in my election address about what God has put on my heart, sharing where I am in this journey, and to open conversation.

I support current Church teaching on marriage. I will listen to and love those who disagree. LLF is flawed in so many ways, risking harm, but an opportunity for dialogue and reconciliation. Let's ensure all views are heard, seek Jesus in all we do; then as a Church we must stop looking inward at each other, often with fear and misunderstanding, and focus on living out the Gospel and sharing the Good News!

*Kim MORGAN-JONES*

I am supportive of giving clergy the option. We should be able to trust that the theological training and Spiritual discernment of our clergy colleagues enables them to act and serve in ways that honour God. This is the case for all circumstances, including same sex marriages and blessings. Whatever the outcome might be here, it is important that the church stops causing hurt to people over this subject and we offer support and healing where it is needed for past, and present, pain that has been caused.

*Claire RUSSELL*

I think it's important that our churches are welcoming and inclusive spaces for all. This is a difficult topic, and the traditional church teaching on the nature of Christian marriage is ancient, based in scripture and long held in common with our brothers and sisters in other denominations. However, I would like to see clergy have the choice to bless same sex unions in accordance with their beliefs and conscience, in much the same way as they currently have the choice as to whether they conduct marriages/blessings for those previously divorced, or couples where one or both are transgender.

*Phil SEWARDS*

I am orthodox on this topic, on theological and scriptural grounds, having spent several years reading, researching and praying about this, as well as conversing with those who hold different views. As yet, I have not seen a convincing argument to the contrary. I continue to welcome discussion with people who disagree, in the spirit of openness and Christian love.

## **QUESTION FIVE**

**Do you have a role in the ministry of your church, and what is it?**

*Rachel ATKINSON*

I am on the leadership team of St. Marks Coventry, and have been involved in almost every aspect of church life and leadership, including pastoral work, Alpha, connect groups, preaching, and strategic development. I am also Principal of St. Marks Academy, which, as well as training young lay leaders for St. Marks and our church plants, is the training provider for Coventry Diocese's mission apprentice scheme.

*Gill FRIGERIO*

In my local church I am on the PCC and deanery synod and take a particular role in relation to justice and peace activities. Recently we have been collecting funds and toiletries for local refugee charities and I have provided a longstanding link with Carriers of Hope in Coventry (which can seem a long way from Warwick). During the pandemic I have led regular online evening prayer using the Northumbria Community rite, building up a regular worshipping group. I am not afraid of a rota: I read and lead intercessions, serve on the altar and preach at relevant services.

*Will JONES*

At church I am involved in children's ministry and men's ministry. In the past I have preached and led services.

*Sam MARGRAVE*

I always held a ministry role in the Church until recently. I studied both stages of the Bishop's Certificate including on Mission. I was licensed and worked in the Diocese. Before lockdown I discussed exploring reader ministry.

But even though I have no 'authorised' or 'official' role, I minister to others all the time and engage in mission and ministry across our Diocese, especially among the marginalised.

I also dedicate a lot of time to Church Governance like Synods, freeing others time. You don't just turn up for 3 weeks a year for General Synod. Its year-round engagement and service.

*Kim MORGAN-JONES*

Yes, I play an active role in the ministry of my church, St Alban's Coventry. I have helped to lead children's and youth work there for the past seven years. This includes leading Sunday morning and evening groups and leading regular youth trips and activities. I am also our Deanery Synod rep and a PCC member. Earlier this year I also took on the role of Church Warden, which is giving me further experience in both serving and leading across the church.

*Claire RUSSELL*

I'm licensed Lay Reader; also Parish Safeguarding Officer, a Youth Leader, on PCC, cantor and Deanery Lay Chair.

*Phil SEWARDS*

I have been a Reader, since 1996, and regularly lead services and preach, among other activities (e.g. leading Alpha courses, encouraging people to read the Bible, promoting prayer for the Persecuted Church ). I believe that we need a committed, trained cadre of lay people to support and complement (but not to *replace*) our hard working (and over-stretched) clergy. Details of my other activities can be found in my election address on the Diocesan website.

## **QUESTION SIX**

**Lay representation at General Synod is disproportionately white, middle class, evangelical and by people married to clergy. How well placed are you to help correct this imbalance?**

*Rachel ATKINSON*

I belong to a group of churches based in a deprived and ethnically diverse area. I am sensitive to the fact that many of these people groups are under-represented within church, and want to see greater diversity, locally and nationally, and especially in leadership.

While I cannot change what I am, I am keen to ensure that the voices of minority groups are heard, and their views are well represented. As a woman operating in the world of theological education for the past 20 years, I have some experience of being a minority voice and the issues related to this.

*Gill FRIGERIO*

We can't elect those who don't stand. We have a long way to go in encouraging a diverse range of Anglicans to see Synod as a place for them. We must think now about 5 years time so we don't continue this skewed representation. I partly meet this demographic, although I am married to an atheist and not an evangelical. I am well placed to work on inclusion as I have been doing this professionally for some time. I would work to ensure that as wide a range of voices as possible are heard in synod debate.

*Will JONES*

I don't think it's helpful to classify people by personal characteristics and suggest that some are more preferable than others. All those who serve on our committees and bodies, whatever their background, are welcome as brothers and sisters in Christ, and I don't think people should be judged by their race, background or socio-economic status.

*Sam MARGRAVE*

Clergy Spouses should be valued, so let's be careful here.

I am not married to Clergy, don't work for the Church or Church School, I am an outsider; I bring that.

I grew up in a single parent family, poverty, I am disabled and mixed heritage. Dad was a Lorry Driver, so not middle class.

I've sought to correct imbalance, not just by being in the room but changing our policies.

I've called for:

- Bishops to engage more with Working Class people
- Statistics about protected groups, so there is measurement, and accountability.
- An inclusive vocation process, about development not judgement.

*Kim MORGAN-JONES*

I agree that we need more diverse representation amongst the lay members of General Synod. Being single, female and under 40, I believe that I would bring something of the diversity that is needed. In terms of church tradition, I appreciate a higher and more traditional style of worship.

*Claire RUSSELL*

Well I'm white British by background, but also female, first of my family to study for a degree, anglo-catholic and single. So I don't think I entirely fit the usual mould. I'm also in fulltime employment as a teacher and so work with a very diverse group of people on a daily basis.

*Phil SEWARDS*

I'm not totally comfortable with categorising people (Gal. 3:26-29) but I do see your point. My view on this is that trying to correct any imbalance using 'quotas' is superficial and merely equates to 'tokenism'. I'm keen that we address this at the parish level by promoting/supporting intentional outreach to those groups in our local communities not well represented in our churches, then encouraging members of those groups to become involved in PCCs, at the Deanery & Diocesan levels and then also at the General Synod level. As for me: I'm not married to a member of the clergy.