

Dr. Rachel Atkinson



Church: St. Marks Coventry

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I am offering myself to serve the Diocese of Coventry, and the wider church, in standing for election to General Synod, because I long to see the Church of England grow in devotion to Christ, unity with one another, and effective mission and service to our communities. In particular, I am passionate about equipping the Church to bring its best theological, pastoral, and strategic thinking to the issues she faces in each generation, and to ensure that before we seek answers, we are asking the right questions!

I hold a first-class degree and a Master's degree in Biblical Studies from the University of Sheffield, as well as a DMin (Doctorate of Ministry) from Spurgeon's College (Trinity St. David), and I have been involved in theological education for two decades. I was Tutor in Mission, first at Spurgeon's College (one of several Anglican tutors in a Baptist College!), and then at St. Mellitus College, where I continue to deliver several lectures each year. Whilst specialising in mission, spirituality, and preaching, I have taught across the curriculum, and have been closely involved in the training and formation of Anglican ordinands - gaining a good working knowledge of the structures and processes of the Church of England, as well as a deep appreciation of its breadth.

I am now 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. This has given me useful insight into strategic missional planning within the Diocese.

I have worshipped in Anglican churches since the age of 18, and have served in church leadership for 25 years, as a lay member of staff teams at St. Andrew's Chorleywood, All Saints Peckham, St. Aldates Oxford, and currently, St. Marks Coventry. Nationally, I served on ACUTE (The Evangelical Alliance's Commission on Unity and Truth among Evangelicals) from 2003-2006, which afforded me valuable experience of working politically and strategically within a broad organisation.

I am married to Phil, Vicar of St. Marks Coventry, and moved with him, and our two young children, nearly five years ago, to plant a new congregation into St. Marks. It has been a journey of faith, as we have sought to build a city centre resource church, with a focus on students and younger people, whilst also seeking to engage with our local community, where levels of deprivation are high. I have been involved in almost every aspect of church life and leadership, including pastoral work, Alpha, connect groups, preaching, and strategic development.

I am deeply committed to the ministry of the local church, I am engaged in the ministry of the Coventry Diocese through my work, and I am keenly aware of the issues facing the Anglican church and its clergy, both through my work as a theological educator, and through my marriage to Phil!

As a working mum, and a lay leader at St. Marks, life is full! However, I have decided to stand for General Synod as the Church of England faces some challenging and potentially divisive issues in its next session, to which I believe I can contribute meaningfully because of both my academic study and my ministry experience. These include debates about **pastoral reorganisation**, where I would like to see Synod resourcing mission and ministry at the parish level, and discussions about **Living in Love and Faith**, where Synod's decisions will significantly shape the Church of England for generations to come.

If elected to General Synod, I would read widely, think theologically, and reflect prayerfully on the issues under discussion. Above all, my heart, and life-long prayer, both for myself and for the Church, is to more closely reflect Jesus, who was full of **both** 'grace and truth' (John 1:14).

I would be honoured to represent the laity of the Coventry Diocese, and would be grateful if you felt able to give me a high preference vote in the forthcoming election.