Abigail Ogier

Candidate’s address

Nominated by Nick Campbell

Seconded by Addy Lazz-Onyenobi

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**About me:**

I was elected to General Synod in a bye-election in October 2020, and have attended the sessions in November, April and July and the informal meeting held in February, all via Zoom. I made my maiden speech in April during the debate regarding improving representation on Crown Nomination Committee and used it to highlight some of the practical barriers that limit the ability of some lay people to serve in this and other roles. I have found membership of General Synod to be a worthwhile role even within my short time so far, and it is one that I am keen to continue, should you choose to re-elect me.

**Church life and involvement:**

I have lived in Manchester all my life, and in that time have been active in several parishes, experiencing something of the breadth of the Church of England. In the past, I have served on the PCCs of three different parishes, I have been PCC Secretary at two and am currently Treasurer of the PCC at St Richard of Chichester, Peel Hall. I have read during services, been part of choirs and music groups and led intercessions since my teens. I have also served in a voluntary capacity as a trustee of both church and secular charities, including Benchill Ecumenical Service Scheme (a charity that provided youth work and counselling) and Independent Choices (a Domestic Abuse charity). I am also currently a trustee of the charity The Church of England in Wythenshawe.

As well as being a committed member of the Church of England, I have for many years been an Associate Member of the Iona Community.

**Professional life:**

I am a qualified Youth and Community Worker and hold an MA in Ethics of Social Welfare. I worked for the national charity, Barnardo’s, for 16 years, most recently as a Children’s Service Manager. I left this post in 2018 to move to a part-time role that aligned better with my voluntary work in the Church. Initially, I worked as Chaplain at Greater Manchester Community Chaplaincy, where I offered practical and spiritual support to people returning to the community after prison sentences. I also visited our local prisons and assisted with “Sycamore Tree” courses at Styal Women’s Prison. Feeling a call towards ministry with older people, and in particular those living with dementia, in 2019 I moved jobs to become Chaplain to an MHA (Methodist Homes) care home, which provides nursing and specialist dementia care.

**And also…**

Personally, I am married to Marc, have two grown up children from my first marriage and am blessed with 2 grandchildren.

In General Synod elections, candidates may not always express their views clearly particularly regarding women’s ministry or inclusion. I would encourage you, if you are unaware of a candidate’s view on any matter, to contact them and ask them. So that you know where I stand, I am committed to equality for everyone, at all levels and in all roles within the church, regardless of gender, disability, ethnicity, socio-economic status, mental health, or sexuality.

**My priorities if re-elected:**

**Inclusion in its widest sense** is a moral imperative, as well as being key to evangelism and growth – if people feel that they are not welcome or respected because of their gender, ethnicity, or sexuality, or if they face barriers when they attend because our buildings or materials are not suited to their needs, they are unlikely to be able to hear our message of God’s love. Young people in particular often find it difficult to reconcile our claim to welcome all people with our failure to actively include and celebrate certain groups such as UKME members of the Church of England, LGBTQI+ people and disabled people. Equally, the way we relate to one another can have a positive or negative impact on how others are able to hear us – John 13:35 makes it clear that our love for one another is important to how we are perceived. All sides in every debate have a responsibility to take care with our words and their impact on others.

**Living in Love and Faith** will be discussed in this next quinquennium and gives an opportunity to build understanding and inclusion. I believe that it is important that those of us who take an inclusive view can clearly articulate the scriptural and theological basis for this, and also to set out the importance of making the discussion, and the whole church, safer for those who are directly affected.

**Racial Justice** is also an area where the church has fallen tragically short in the past. The failure to implement all the recommendations of the Racial Justice Task Force was disappointing, and it is important that we continue to push for a means of ensuring that progress continues. Manchester has been at the forefront in ensuring that Christians from United Kingdom Ethnic Minority groups are able to fulfil their vocations, and we have the potential to contribute to sharing good practice with other dioceses.

**Climate change** is a genuine emergency. I welcome the commitment by General Synod to become carbon net zero by 2030 – the challenge now is to work out how this is achieved. Our buildings and their grounds can be both a challenge and an asset in achieving this. We need to listen to scientists and other experts in the field, and to ensure that every other decision that we take is taken with due regard to its impact in this area.

**Links with other denominations can strengthen us all.** Although a lifelong Anglican, I have had the privilege of studying at a Roman Catholic sixth form college, working in two Ecumenical charities alongside trustees and colleagues from a range of churches, leading the Northwest Christian Fellowship at Barnardo’s and currently of working for Methodist Homes. I know from my own experience that no one denomination has a monopoly on insight and understanding and am committed to exploring how and where we can work more closely together, with due regard for our own traditions and theology.

**Clergy wellbeing** is vital to the health of the Church. As with other caring professions, ministers are vulnerable to overwork and burn out. When problems arise, it seems that the Clergy Discipline Measure (CDM) causes great distress and anxiety to clergy, as well as being an unwieldy and sometimes ineffective tool for addressing poor practice and misconduct. My view is that whatever replaces the current CDM should include a differentiated response to different kinds of allegation, effective mediation when disputes arise between lay people and clergy at an early stage, and remedies that are safe for all and that include assessment of the dynamics involved, identifying any possibility of bullying between any of the parties.

Thank you for reading my address – if you wish to discuss anything, please contact me; my email and telephone number are in the heading at the start of the address. I would be very grateful for your first preference vote, or the highest preference you feel able to give me.