

"So there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and free people, between men and women; you are all one in union with Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:28

This verse from Paul's letter to the Galatians is how I aim to approach each and every day. I firmly believe and trust that we are all equal in the eyes of God, one united family in Christ. We should be totally inclusive, welcoming everyone into our churches, places of worship and communities and all those who come into our lives with compassion, love and understanding.

Being a parent of three children, a teacher by profession, Head of Department and Year 11 Form Tutor involved in intervention strategies, inclusion and transition, it has taught me how different we all are and how background and upbringing affect the way we think and act, all the different social aspects. Gaining counselling qualifications and an MA in Education underpinned this. On retirement I wanted to continue being involved in helping within the church and community and became a member of Mothers' Union (MU) as part of this. I believe in a faith-based and community-led approach to tackling poverty, injustice and violence, prayer and faith in action, providing support and love free of judgement. I have been involved with running parenting groups and helping on courses in prisons and during my time as a Trustee of MU in Manchester was responsible for all outreach programmes both national and local. I then became Diocesan President for six years, continuing work with all three of our prisons, Domestic Abuse organisations, refuges, victims of modern slavery and refugees, as well as our Away From It All Holiday (AFIA) scheme. I was honoured to receive the Maundy Money.

I am now the York Provincial President for Mothers' Union and was commissioned in York Minster by the Archbishop of York. This means I am part of the Britain and Ireland Group and Worldwide Council. I am also on the steering groups for Safeguarding, AFIA, Prisons, Domestic Abuse and Modern Slavery. As PP I look after all 12 dioceses within York Province and have travelled quite extensively meeting clergy, chaplains, dignitaries and many MU members at various events and services. I often have to organise big Provincial events. This year has been especially busy as it is the 150th year since the founding of MU. I have seen how diverse we all are as a Province, whether within our communities, our local needs, challenges, or distances to travel. I have seen how hard our laity work. I have listened and learned. I was at the last General Synod helping on an MU stand in the Exhibition Hall and met so many interesting people. This also meant I was able to sit in the Public Gallery to listen to some of the debates and this encouraged me with my nomination.

The role of our laity is vitally important within the life of our churches and places of worship. We are needed to support our clergy in the running of our churches however seemingly small our contribution. "The body is made up of many parts. 1Corinthians12:12." There is so much to do in the running of a church. I am on my church PCC and Deanery Synod, support my husband who is church warden, help lead services, arrange community events and contact with local organisations and have been the Parish Safeguarding Officer for many years. I am passionate about the importance of Safeguarding as part of a healthy church culture. As a member of the diocesan PSO network for my Deanery I have been trained to deliver the Basic and Foundation safeguarding training for parishes. I am the governor responsible for SEND at a local Church of England Primary School.

We must never underestimate the role of our parishes, the grass roots where so many seeds are planted and so much hard work and love in the community is shown. Parish opinions, ideas and questions should always be a big part of how we approach major decision making. There are many little roles within the church to fulfil apart from the more major ones. Everyone's

contribution counts and their opinions should be valued, appreciated, respected and be seen to matter. This needs to be recognised at General Synod. Our laity are often the ones people will confide in. Laity know their local areas and where support is needed. What we do to support our communities is of tremendous importance. Our churches need to be seen as a prominent and welcoming part of all that goes on, contributing actively, showing that we care about our schools, businesses, organisations and charities. We are not just the church down the road.

Life is not as it was. Things change rapidly especially with the influence, good or bad, of social media. We need to be open to and accept change with all its challenges and new ways of doing things it presents. Through prayer and faith in God, we can do this. However, we must remember to learn from and build on the past and the valuable contributions and decisions of previous generations. So much to value, respect and reflect on in future decision making. Being able to serve Manchester Diocese at General Synod and a voice for our parishes would be a tremendous privilege for me.