

General Synod Statement

I am standing for election to General Synod because I believe passionately in the priority of building up the Kingdom of God and the truth of the Gospel revealed to us by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and manifested in His Church through Word and Sacrament.

I am a Priest in North Manchester having been ordained now for over twenty years, during this time I have served in parochial ministry in Oldham, Salford, Southport and North Manchester (my current parishes are Failsworth, Lightbowne and Blackley). These parishes are diverse and multi-cultural which helps to shape a wider worldview, not just of place but the whole Anglican Communion of its present and its future as being lived out in the Diocese of Manchester. The parishes keep me grounded and enable me to have a very open understanding of not just the parochial settings they are in but the challenges and opportunities faced by our communities and the context they are in. We are blessed by and encouraged by our strong youth work, and this keeps us in tune with the future leaders of the church.

However this is never at the expense of those more senior in our congregations and the care of the elderly is paramount as each and every one of us is precious to Almighty God and we benefit greatly from their wisdom and their experience.

My parishes are committed to the Eco life within our Diocese, one of the parishes is a Silver Award holder, and the other two are well on their way to Bronze. The importance of being a church that engages with ecology and the immediate actions that we need to take is something, which the parishes and I engage with on a serious level. We are very much part of being an Eco Church and have created two very important green spaces which are having a positive impact on the local eco system.

Although having sojourned outside the diocese for one post it was great to be able to return to Manchester where I have always felt at home, the cultural diversity and the excitement around this wonderful place really engages me and I thank the Lord for being able to serve in such a place. I am whole-heartedly at the centre of my being Jesus centred and committed to the service of the servants of God. I am rooted in the Catholic tradition as lived out in the Church of England. I am really heartened to have been nominated by Archdeacon Karen Best and Canon Helen Scanlan.

I also serve the diocese as an Honorary Canon of Manchester Cathedral as well as being a member of various bodies such as the Diocesan Synod, Racial Justice Board, DMPC, DAC (*of which I am Chair*) and the Council for Social Aid. I am also a Mission Community Leader in the Deanery of Manchester North and East.

I do want to note the Racial Justice Board involvement, because I do believe that at this moment in our nation there is still a very wide gap on this very pertinent matter. I believe very strongly that the Church should be at the forefront of this matter for all people and that undeniably there is one race, the human race and so therefore any imbalance in this is totally wrong and we as a church must call this out and promote the equality of race and gender, all are one in Christ.

I am also a Vocations Advisor and Examining Chaplain and value greatly the opportunity to walk alongside those discovering what the Lord is calling them to in the life of the church.

I am also a School Governor at two church schools as well as being on the board of a faith academy school, the richness and strength of our diocesan schools are such a key factor in helping us be a church for a different world and in the priority of Growing younger in our Diocese.

In the life of the Church at this moment in time we live through challenging times, each generation finds that there will be issues, which they have to engage with, and we live through no different circumstances.

Before the birth of Jesus the world was known as Before Christ, then after his birth becomes After Christ (Year of Our Lord) but as Christians we do not live before or after him, we live with him and through him. Our own words and examples will present him to the world, that is how we will be seen, the optics are crucial if we are to attract others to know and love him.

To quote Stuart Blanch (*former Archbishop of York*)

'Politics is too important to leave to the politicians'- the church must be in every area of life and helping to build communities in harmony particularly at a multi-cultural engagement level with people who choose to make their home here through being economic migrants or through seeking asylum due to terror.

Through good governance and healthy conversation, which leads to debate, we have to as Anglicans I believe find a Via Media, which is one of the hallmarks of classical Anglicanism. It is a way forward that will, I believe, enable us all in a way that makes room for a divergence of opinions all under him who is the way, the truth and the life. Through genuine Caritas, one for another, we will I feel be able to grow and be a blessing to the life of God's Church on earth and in heaven and especially to our nation as a national church and the wider Anglican Communion.

Undoubtedly, for the life of General Synod and the Church of England Same Sex marriage will continue to feature highly on Synod's agenda.

I am totally committed to listening and making my mind up in due course with a hope and desire, given the diversity, which is clearly in existence in the Church. It is at this moment in time impossible to square up a circle and so I am committed to the highest degree of communion between us all. I would be happy to speak with any of the electorate to elucidate this in conversation. The difficulty and strain for the unity of the Church of England is of tantamount importance and it is important to find a way that everybody can stay within the life of the Church of England.

There is no doubt that sometimes we all feel the strain and stress of the dynamics we find ourselves in as serving clergy, whether stipendiary, SSM, chaplaincies or other aspects of ministry that we live through, most keenly felt through the way in which resources are not as they once were.

That said we still have the joy of the Gospel. If we focus on this as our core and we must not lose sight of that, when we might experience our Emmaus moments of walking away it is crucial to hold onto that joy, that ember. The crucial thing about that road to Emmaus is that it goes both ways and the way back is by following Christ and discovering that joy when our hearts are set on fire by him through the revealing of scriptures and the breaking of bread.

As a member of General Synod, I would be faithful and loyal to you and the needs you would wish me to act upon as a way forward for the furtherance of the Kingdom of God. I would be a servant that looks forward and walks with Jesus. I would do my utmost to fully engage and play a full part across the life of our Diocese and the Church of England. I believe wholeheartedly in the joy of the Gospel and especially in the uniqueness of our diocese and the people of God found in Manchester and I hope that I reflect that in the person that God is calling me to be.

Paul Hutchins.