

General Synod: Why am I standing for election?

This is the first time I've stood for General Synod. I've provided some details about my background and what topics you can expect me to support, if elected.

My background

- I've been a member of All Saints Church in Wokingham (Berkshire) since 1996, a member of its PCC for 12 years and Sonning Deanery Synod for nine years and I'm just about to start my second three-year term on the Diocesan Synod this September. I've worked in all sorts of church settings over the years, including charismatic, evangelical and liberal. Plus I've worked a lot with other denominations (see next two points).
- I'm chair of the Wokingham Christian Aid (CA) group and have been the local CA rep for my church for seven years.
- In the eighties and nineties I was a board member of the Greenbelt Arts festival and did a lot of work on various committees ranging from selecting bands, helping with the retail business, running the film programme, writing for their festival magazine and giving the odd seminar. I'm still a regular attender. I was also a trustee for Third Way magazine (RIP) at the time and a fairly regular contributor on all things technological and musical.
- I work for a global IT consulting firm in their sector marketing team, with responsibility for the financial services sector. I've worked in sales and marketing since the mid-eighties and helped launch brands as well as work on some large IT deals (my biggest was a five year global deal for a billion dollars – which we won). I did a stint of management consulting, mainly strategy and marketing, for eight years, mostly in Europe and Asia.
- I've been a fan of the Irish rock group U2 since 1983 and a supporter of Everton FC for even longer (I lived about a mile away from their ground for most of my childhood). I'm an active supporter of the YMCA and was on the board of Action for Children, a youth homelessness charity.

My values

These are the topics I want to promote. I believe in 'disagreeing well' (to quote Justin Welby) and would genuinely welcome the opportunity to discuss these topics with you.

- **LGBT+:** I want the Church of England to be a safe place for my LGBT+ sisters and brothers, a place where they can use their gifts and where they can be valued, respected and loved. I am a believer in same-sex marriage and I don't see this as inconsistent with scripture. It has saddened me immensely the way the Church of England has treated this group over many years. Justin Welby has talked of 'radical Christian inclusion' (which is good), but, frankly, I'd just like some normal inclusion to begin with! The Living in Love and Faith (LLF) report is a good piece of work (and has been costly in terms of those individuals who contributed to it). It will receive much more discussion at the next Synod and I want to be part of that debate.
- **Race:** Justin Welby said that the Church of England is 'institutionally racist' (which is a brave but shocking thing to confess). However, I'm not convinced the proposed quota system is the way around the problem. There have been so many reports on racial injustice by the Church of England over the years – but little action. Even the latest report's recommendations are being ignored (having a racial justice officer in each Diocese, for example), due to lack of money. In my experience, if you really want to do something, money tends to take care of itself.

- **Climate:** I'm excited that the Church of England wants to get to Net Zero by 2030. I'm not excited by the fact that the Church Commissioners think it will be 2050! The policy of active engagement is clearly not working. We need to disinvest from fossil fuel companies and banks who are investing in them (as many denominations are already doing). We are stewards of creation and we are responsible to our children and grand-children for the way we look after our fragile blue planet.
- **Safeguarding:** Clearly, the Clergy Discipline Measure and some current safeguarding practices are not fit for purpose (Father Alan Griffin is the most recent tragic example). Proposed revisions will not be enough to stop such tragedies. There needs to be much greater disclosure at the start for the respondent, substantially better support for them throughout the process and significantly faster resolution. We also need to ensure the safety of children, young people and vulnerable adults. Although this has been on our agenda for many years now, new evidence keeps coming to light of the silent suffering of yet more victims. We must do better.

I hope this gives you a reasonable picture of who I am and why I am putting myself forward.

Thank you for reading this. I hope you can support my nomination.

Peter Barrett