



Helen Lamb
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Dear Elector

I write to ask you prayerfully to consider giving me your highest preference vote in the 2024 by-election for General Synod. Below is a brief outline of what you could expect if you vote for me. If you would like more details or to discuss anything in particular, please feel free to get in touch.

Personal Details

I am 45, married to Al who is an academic doctor, dividing his time between research and clinical work. We have two teenage children and a dopey golden retriever.

I was born in South Africa, moved to England when I was 4 and grew up in a rural parish church. Having married a medical student, we have moved between Edinburgh, Cambridge and Oxford with a year in Melbourne, Australia along the way.

We are now settled in Headington, Oxford near the hospital where my husband works and love being part of church, where we lead a homegroup and our children love the fun and fellowship of the youth group and playing music for services.

Wider church involvement

I was a member of General Synod for Ely Diocese between 2015-17, until we moved out of the diocese and I stood down. It was just long enough to learn a lot and not quite long enough to be properly useful – I'd love the chance to serve with what I learned. I do think it will be particularly helpful to have some experience, as joining Synod midway through a quinquennium does mean skipping the induction support. I also have experience as a trustee of several charities, including patronage responsibilities through which I have been involved in the appointment of two incumbents in Oxford Diocese during the past three years.

Professional Background

I have more than 20 years of experience as a Human Resources professional – 10 years in big companies after which I began consulting for smaller organisations in contexts ranging from GP practices to commercial property development. I provide support in all areas of HR, most often including leadership and team development and specific people issues.

As a freelance consultant, I have flexibility with my time and can therefore commit to the work that goes with serving on General Synod. Professionally, my job is often to ask probing questions of senior leaders, ensuring that the consequences and implications of decisions are properly considered. Accountability, governance and good leadership are vital to all organisations and I am convinced that these are areas the Church of England has much to improve on.

I love the Church of England. It has been the context for my spiritual growth and our children are now growing up in it. I long for it to witness to the love of Jesus Christ in every village, town and city across the country as the liturgy communicates God's revelation of himself in Scripture. The culture and context continue to change but Christ remains the One with the words of eternal life.

Governance and accountability

There is a need for good governance and accountability in every organisation. The history, structure and pastoral responsibilities of the Church of England create unique complexities, but they are not excuses. We have a long way to go with our governance structures, clarity of decision making processes, accountability and wise use of money sacrificially given for ministry. Addressing our safeguarding failures is rightly a focus, and there are broader issues we also have to manage alongside. I believe my experience will bring useful expertise in asking questions, identifying needs and helping to define how we change so our church witnesses to the people, groups and communities as the Lord has commissioned us, not just endlessly employing more managers.

Clergy

Our continued witness to the nation is facing significant challenges, and I believe a crucial one is in the experience of clergy, who are the shepherds under Christ Jesus. We face a catastrophic loss of current clergy in projected retirement, burnout and disillusionment. This is combining with a crisis of vocations in prospective ordination candidates. As a Council member for a theological college training Church of England ordinands, we are seeing a whole range of factors affecting the confidence of those currently in training as well as those considering ordination. If we are to be the church in every parish, we have to be willing to have some very candid discussions about how we encourage more people to consider ordained ministry, how we support and sustain those already in it and what barriers we are creating or perpetuating which we need to address.

Future

The Church of England is in the midst of considering weighty matters of theology, doctrine and church practice. I believe that the work of the past years through LLF and beyond has helped us all to understand one another better, to talk more graciously with each other and to acknowledge the depth of disagreement within the Church of England. Personally, I hold a traditional view of marriage as between one man and one woman for life, providing a profound and beautiful illustration of the ultimate marriage of Christ and the Church to which we are all called. And I am convicted that the church has not loved everyone as God does. The task of General Synod is now to witness to grace and truth in Jesus Christ for our nation. How we need it.

I hope this gives some insight into my nomination and how I might make a contribution to the work of General Synod. If you would like to discuss anything in more detail, please do get in touch with me. I hope that you will consider giving me your first, or high preference, vote.

Yours in Christ,

Helen Lamb