

Elections to General Synod from Guildford Diocese: Sept 2015

This month is the five yearly elections to General Synod. The Guildford Diocese has an allocation of four clergy and four lay places. The clergy vote in the clergy election, lay deanery synod members are entitled to vote in the lay election. 9 October is the deadline for voting and the count is on 12 October.

The Guildford Diocese website has all the information, including the election statements of the six clergy and 14 lay candidates, and our answers to the on-line hustings questions that have been

submitted: <http://www.cofeguildford.org.uk/about/governance/general-synod/general-synod-election-2015>

I am one of the lay candidates, standing for a second term.
I attach my election statement.

All 14 candidates attended the lay hustings at Guildford Cathedral on 17 September and about 50 of the 400 electors attended. We have also been receiving questions on-line hustings. The answers of all the candidates are on the Diocesan website. Below are my answers:

Question 1: *"May I ask candidates what they think the Church of England's response should be to the refugee crisis in Calais? Do we help them where they are, or do we encourage them to seek asylum here? May I also refer them to the '[linked](#)' article?"* Shelagh Godwin, Member of Godalming Deanery Synod

Answer: I have been thinking - and praying - about the current international crisis. I have wondered what I would do if as a family we felt our best hope was to try to escape from war or hunger, and our best prospect was, rather than seek asylum in the first country we arrive in, to try and make for a further country. What should the Church of England's response be to the refugee crisis in Calais? I guess we should seek to work alongside other churches, not only in offering practical help, but also to try to work internationally to be a broker with Governments to try and address the causes. The CofE is a member of the Conference of European Churches (CEC) www.ceceurope.org and our former bishop, Christopher Hill, is the President. The CEC has the advantage of being Europe-wide and represents many denominations, but as a consequence is also unwieldy. In short, I'm sorry, I don't know.

Question 2: *"Please would you indicate what your position is on the difficult issue of assisted dying. Would you rule it out completely, or would you consider one of various possible options designed to safeguard the person wishing to be helped to die?"* Liz Hammond, Lay member, Emly Deanery Synod

Answer: I agree with the official Church of England view set out in the paper by Dr Brendan McCarthy <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/1747118/assistedsuicide.pdf>

"For the good of society and individuals, it is essential that both the law and medical practice embrace a presumption in favour of life. While this does not mean that life must be maintained at all costs, it does mean that no one ought to be permitted actively to end another person's life. [...] Arguments in favour of assisted suicide often favour an evaluation of human life that is based either on the faculties and abilities that an individual enjoys or on an individual's sense of personal worth. While these are important considerations, they cannot take the place of the intrinsic value of every person's life. [...] every person is inherently valuable and deserves to be treated with respect. While assisted suicide is contrary to the principles outlined above, other end of life decisions ought to be respected. This means respecting the decisions of patients who choose not to receive treatment."

Question 3: *"Does God speak to you? If so, how?"* Christopher Watts, Woking Deanery Synod lay member and Guildford Diocesan Synod lay member

Answer: I became a Christian at Guildford Crusaders - now called Urban Saints - and with my friends at Crusaders we used to joke that the answer to every question was "pray about it, read the Bible, and ask an older leader". Although we joked, it was actually good advice. I read the Bible and pray on the train in my commute to London; at the 8am service at my church, the traditional liturgy, the sacraments, the Bible reading and sermon all speak to me; and we pray as a family in the evenings. I don't hear a 'physical' internal voice from God, but God is speaking to me, and I need to be better at listening.

Question 4: *"There is an astonishing emphasis in the election addresses on body membership. It is easy to join bodies and not add much value. More important by a mile is what candidates have done to expand the membership of their churches. There is nothing in the addresses on this, so could candidates explain exactly what they have done?"* Chris Gibson, Godalming DS

Answer: All Christians need to share the Good News of Jesus Christ with those around them. I regret that I am no "Billy Graham", but it would probably not have been the best use of Billy's time to be on General Synod spending many days studying draft legislation and budgets! Until last year I was a youth club leader at the Good Shepherd, Pyrford, which provides a first step into the Church for many children with no church background. Now at All Saints', Woodham, I try to play my small part in encouraging those who already attend; and on the PCC to see how the church can continue its role to deepen our spiritual lives and to share that with others. With my wife Dorothe, I have a part in helping my children in the Christian faith - they "count" too!

Question 5: *"What is your view on equal marriage and the church? Specifically would you like to see gay people marry in church? And would you like to see the ordination of married gay people?"* Kristina Ingate, Guildford Deanery Synod Laity

Answer: My views are in my May 2012 submission to the Church of England's Human Sexuality Working Group, on my website. My submission is 13 pages long where I carefully set out my thinking. I cannot adequately cut that down into the 200 word limit of these on-line hustings. If you don't have that time to read those 13 pages, and require a 'short cut' answer from me: I support the official Church of England position set out in the "House of Bishops Pastoral Guidance on Same Sex Marriage" of February 2014 on the CofE website:

<https://www.churchofengland.org/media-centre/news/2014/02/house-of-bishops-pastoral-guidance-on-same-sex-marriage.aspx>

Adrian Vincent

16 Faris Barn Drive, Woodham, Surrey, KT15 3DZ.
 Email avwebsite@hotmail.co.uk
 Website www.adrianvincent.org.uk
 Tel 01932 349335 (evenings and weekends)



I am standing for election to General Synod for a second term. In this election address I first set out my record against my 2010 election promises. Then I look ahead to the next term.

Promises in my 2010 election address	What I subsequently did.
<p><i>“Increasing openness and participation:</i> Before each Synod meeting I will list on my website the items coming up for debate at General Synod and invite you to send me your views. After each meeting I will publish on the website the decisions that were taken, how I voted and why.”</p>	<p>I have done this for every Synod meeting. All my reports are on this section of my website: www.adrianvincent.org.uk/agenda.html</p>
<p><i>Widening the electorate:</i> “I will work for change to ensure that everyone on an electoral roll will have the right to vote for their General Synod representative.”</p>	<p>In 2011 I made a submission to the Elections Review Group seeking that change. The Synod Business Committee did not accept my proposal. In July 2013 I seconded a motion to introduce it. The motion was not passed. I won’t give up.</p>
<p><i>“Working more efficiently:</i> On my website I give examples of where money might be saved through reducing duplication and unnecessary expenditure at national and diocesan level. Such savings would limit the future increases in parish share.”</p>	<p>In 2010 and 2011 I submitted formal Synod questions pressing for efficiency savings www.adrianvincent.org.uk/questions.html If you have ideas for future savings I would be grateful to receive them.</p>
<p><i>“Women Bishops:</i> I will encourage people to move beyond campaigning from their own ‘camp’ and instead to seek a deeper appreciation of the views of those with whom they disagree. We need to respect other people’s theological integrity. Only then will we find a way to introduce the ordination of women to the episcopate without splitting the Church.”</p>	<p>The first draft women bishops legislation in 2012 would not have kept the Church together and I voted against. The revised legislation in 2014 was better, being based on a commitment to the “mutual flourishing” of all traditions in the Church and I voted in favour.</p>

Memberships

The notes for candidates, from the diocese, encourages candidates to include in their election addresses “the candidate’s membership of any body if the electorate might reasonably consider the fact of such membership to be relevant when deciding to vote for them.”

I have a high view of the Bible and consequently am a member of the Evangelical Group of General Synod (EGGS) and Reform. I also have a high view of the sacraments and consequently am a member of the Catholic Group in General Synod. I attend my local church, All Saints’ Woodham <http://www.allsaintswoodham.org.uk/welcome/>

Looking ahead

If I am re-elected I will continue before each Synod meeting to publish on my website the key issues and invite anyone to send me their thoughts; and after each meeting I will continue to publish the key decisions made and how I voted.

I will continue a hardworking approach whereby at the stage of the construction of Church legislation, to take a detailed interest and offer constructive improvements.¹ Then, at the debating stage, if I have a new and constructive point to raise I make a speech. I do not speak to repeat a point made by a previous speaker.

The General Synod needs a change of attitude. Synod spends too much of its time and focus debating the precise wording of motions which we pass, calling on the Government or dioceses to do something - after which we relax feeling pleased with a job well done. The reality is that the Government and dioceses generally take little or no notice of motions passed by Synod. I will therefore do my best to influence the Synod culture to:

- 1) ***Be more realistic***: focus on the things where General Synod can actually make a difference, rather than general exhortations. This is often unexciting things like simplifying Church procedures to make life in the parishes easier.
- 2) ***Be more professional***: an example of where we can make a difference is in national research, such as the report "*From Anecdote to Evidence: Findings from the Church Growth Research Programme 2011-13*" <http://www.churchgrowthresearch.org.uk/report>
- 3) ***Give greater attention to implementation***.

Please feel free to contact me to discuss any of the above. I would be grateful for your support.

¹ During the 2010-15 Synod term I have written submissions to: the Revision Committee on Additional Eucharistic Prayers; the Human Sexuality Working Group; the Revision Committee on the Draft Clergy Discipline (Amendment) Measure; the Revision Committee on the Church of England (Miscellaneous Provisions) Measure; Additional Texts for Holy Baptism; Regulations on the administration of Holy Communion; the powers of a bishop to suspend Readers and Licensed Lay Ministers; and the consultation on a possible new Enabling Measure. All of these submissions are on my website.