

I have been a Christian all my adult life and a Reader in the Church of England for more than 30 years. I recently retired from active Reader ministry and was granted the title of Reader Emeritus. Much of my ministry was in rural parishes, and I remain very committed to the life of the local church: its worship, its communities and its witness to the people among whom it is set.

My professional life has been rather different. I am a mathematician and cryptographer, and spent much of my career in government, including at GCHQ, before retiring as Chief Mathematician in 2009. I have worked in both academic and government settings and have experience of organisations at a national level. I am a Fellow of the Royal Society and a Companion of the Order of the Bath. My professional experience has taught me how to get things done, both in technical work and in organisations where decisions have to be reached through committees and people with different views.

Since retirement I have also been active in my local community. I have been a volunteer adviser with Citizens Advice for over ten years, specialising in employment advice. This has brought me into contact with many people whose lives are very different from my own. It has reminded me how differently decisions made by institutions can look from the receiving end, and how important it is to understand the circumstances of the people affected by them.

For relaxation I am active in local theatre, both performing and helping to support local venues. My life has therefore taken me into some rather different worlds: the Church, science and government, and more recently community work and voluntary organisations. I think that experience has made me comfortable with people who see things differently from me.

I have no particular faction to represent. I value the traditions of the Church, but I am also willing to question the way things are done when I believe that we have lost sight of their purpose. I have decided to stand for General Synod because I believe the Church is facing some important choices about its future, and I now have the time and experience to make a useful contribution. In particular, I want to help ensure that the national Church remains properly connected to the life of its parishes and to the communities they serve. I hope to bring to Synod a combination of long experience of the local Church and experience of the wider world.

I am very aware of the increasing challenges faced by local ministry. I believe that the parish should remain at the heart of the Church's life, particularly in small and rural communities. I share many of the concerns expressed by Save the Parish, especially its emphasis on properly resourcing local parish ministry. The parish matters to me not simply because it is an inherited structure, but because it gives the Church a continuing presence in the communities it serves.

At the same time, I have not sought to become a representative of any particular grouping. I would want to consider the proposals that come before Synod on their merits, looking at the evidence, what they would mean in practice, and their effects on different parishes and communities. When difficult issues come before Synod, my instinct is to find common purpose—not by avoiding disagreement, but by working to ensure they do not become divisions.

Theologically I am increasingly comfortable with mystery. My background as a mathematician and scientist has not led me to think that everything important can be reduced to what we can explain or prove. If anything, the extraordinary power of science has deepened my sense of how mysterious reality ultimately is. I do not try to describe my theology in neat categories. I am more interested in trying to live faithfully.

At the heart of my Christian faith is Christ's command to love God and our neighbour. For me, that provides the fundamental test by which we should approach the rules and structures of the Church. I am deeply committed to a Church that reflects the radical hospitality of Jesus Christ: a Church in which people are treated with dignity, where nobody is made to feel that they do not belong, and where our differences do not prevent us from sharing in its common life.

I believe the Church is at its truest when it combines faithfulness to the gospel with the humility to ask whether the way we have organised ourselves still serves the purposes for which we exist. I would like to see a Church that is confident in its faith but open and welcoming to those who come to it, and more concerned with serving people and communities than with protecting institutional boundaries.

Overall, I would hope to bring to Synod long experience of the Church, professional experience of public service, and close contact through Citizens Advice with people facing the everyday difficulties of life. I would bring my own judgement rather than represent any particular faction, and I would try to listen carefully to people with whom I disagree and recognise when they have a point. Above all, I would want to help the Church make difficult decisions without losing sight of the people and communities it exists to serve.