



General Synod Elections: House of Clergy

Revd Canon Dr Claire Dawson

Proposer: The Revd Anesia Nascimento de Jesus Cook, Racial Justice Officer

Seconder: Revd Canon Phil Batchford, Vicar of Rotherham Minster

As I have been thinking about why I want to stand for General Synod and what to write in this Personal Statement. I was drawn back to a young person, Maxine who I met the night before her twelfth birthday. I was working at the time on a project in Derby City for young people exploited through sexual exploitation. Maxine was getting in and out of cars looking for men to have sex with. A few years later I found myself training for ordination alongside my work on this project. This was now some twenty-five years ago but I have kept Maxine with me throughout my ministry. I want church to be a place where young people like Maxine can find a welcome and a belonging. Can find their way to the Living Waters of Jesus Christ and drink and never thirst again.

I will be standing for synod as a person who:

Has a deep commitment to a social gospel. Prior to ordination I worked as a qualified social worker and have worked extensively with marginalised groups and marginalised communities throughout my working life. Serving in the ex-coal mining communities of North Nottinghamshire; a small urban parish in Liverpool and currently in a deprived multicultural parish at St Mary's. I am challenged by the question of how we resource and sustain churches in our poorest communities. I would want to contribute to debates and working groups on issues of poverty and serving those on the margins.

Is passionate about clergy wellbeing. In my work as Assistant and Acting Archdeacon I was struck by the calibre of ordained and lay ministers serving in our Diocese. I was also struck by the burden often experienced by clergy in responding to the unbounded needs and asks of ministry and also the devastating effect that a CDM can place on clergy person. Within my own life and ministry, I have had periods of depression which have been exacerbated by the loneliness and isolation of the role. As a synod member I will be keen to contribute to debates which impact clergy wellbeing including the new CCM; clergy stipends; housing and support for retired clergy.

Understands Safeguarding as central to the Church's mission. Prior to ordination I worked as a Local Authority Child Protection Officer. I am aware that as Church we still have so much to learn and put right. I have a lot to contribute to this important work of synod; ensuring we continue to strive for a Church which is safe for all and priorities the voices and experiences of survivors.

Is committed to Racial Justice. At St Mary's we are privileged to have a very ethnically diverse congregation and together we have 'learnt to talk about race' – we are on a journey. I have supported the work of Revd Anesia Cook (Racial Justice Officer) and am aware that as a Church we still have a long way to travel from 'Lament to Action'. As a member of synod, I would advocate well and speak out against systemic issues of racism – that the Church may better represent the communities in which she serves.

'I have known Claire for many years and have worked closely with her in her capacity as both Assistant and Acting Archdeacon of Sheffield and Rotherham. She is an Honorary Canon of Sheffield Cathedral and also sits on the Cathedral Nominations Committee where she has provided helpful challenge and support as we seek to strengthen our governance. On the Bishop's Council she has a clear voice and asks important and courageous questions. Claire leads one of the most diverse and lively churches in Sheffield City Centre and it is a joy to minister alongside someone with a quiet and steadfast commitment to inclusion and justice. I have every confidence that she would make an excellent contribution to the work of General Synod and I am delighted to nominate her.'

The Very Revd Abi Thompson Dean

'Claire has significant and relevant experience from both before her ordination and subsequently that will enable her to make a significant contribution to the life of General Synod. She has a passion for the poor and marginalised and understands the power of a social gospel to bridge across cultural and social boundaries. Claire is committed to supporting the well-being of all clergy and is willing to name the challenges we face as a Diocese (in which she has served for 9 years) and the wider church, in order to assist in the addressing of them. I wholeheartedly support her nomination.'

Revd Canon Phil Batchford Vicar of Rotherham

Net Zero & Climate Change. I am supportive of our commitment to Net Zero and recognise the very real and pressing issue of climate change and our need to act. The target of Net Zero by 2030 is unrealistic, this needs reframing as does the massive challenge of enabling our church buildings and vicarages to be carbon neutral.

SMMIB Funding. In Sheffield Diocese we have benefitted from a significant investment by the Church Commissioners. However, I am concerned that this funding is creating inequalities – where there is funding there is growth but what about the places where there is no funding? I am also concerned about sustainability once the funding comes to an end.

Mutual Flourishing. This area of our Church life continues to cause a lot of pain and distress for all. In Sheffield we have the highest number of parishes outside of London who have extended episcopacy oversight. As a female clergy person, I often feel the ask is with me to accommodate views which are other than my own. I value the relationship of my colleagues from all traditions and value their ministries. We still have a lot of work to do in this area of our Church life.

Equality. "I am committed to equality for everyone, at all levels and roles within the church, regardless of disability, economic power, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, learning disability, mental health, neurodiversity, or sexuality." I would be supportive of the Church moving to a place which values all relationships equally and would affirm a Church which accepts and supports gay marriage.

Thank you for taking the time to read my nomination paper. Please contact me if you have any further questions. I would very much value your first preference vote.

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