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Proposer: Helen Hesketh - Leyland Deanery Synod rep
Seconder: John Balaam - Blackburn Diocesan Synod rep

About Me

I grew up in Blackpool and moved to New York in my twenties, where I met Joe. We were married in Lytham St Annes and have just celebrated our twentieth anniversary. We have two boys: 19-year-old Kenny and 12-year-old Bobby. After a decade in New Longton, we moved to Tarleton in 2024 as Joe serves his curacy in the parishes of Tarleton and Rufford. I am still very much connected to All Saints' New Longton, where I worship regularly, serve on the PCC, act as Deanery Synod Representative, and have been employed as the vicar's PA for a number of years!



I wasn't brought up in a household that regularly attended church, and I came into church life more recently, being confirmed as an adult. Coming to know Jesus brought a warmth and joy to my life that was completely new to me, and I found a sense of belonging that I hadn't realised I was looking for.

My background is in the travel industry. I have spent much of my career organising school trips around the world, occasionally being lucky enough to accompany groups of students and witness their experiences firsthand. In my spare time, I enjoy spending time with my family and my dog, Freya, reading historical fiction, and watching musicals!

Why I am Standing for General Synod

I feel called to stand for General Synod as I am heavily involved with my parish church in both a personal and professional capacity, and I feel excited about the future of the Church of England as it goes through a period of renewal and change. I am particularly passionate about the future of our parish churches and how we can equip them to be confident, outward-looking communities of faith, where children, families, and people of all ages can come together in their worship of Jesus.

I recently became PA to the Area Dean of Leyland. Along with my work for the Vicar of New Longton, this role has given me a much wider insight into how ordinary parish churches and the wider Church of England work. I have been exposed to many different kinds of church recently and find it fascinating how widely the Church of England reaches people of all ages, backgrounds and circumstances. I would love to bring that experience to General Synod, particularly at a time when important decisions are being made about the future of parish ministry, mission, resources, safeguarding, and how we engage with a rapidly changing society.

I believe that, whatever the challenges we face, the Church must remain a place where all kinds of people can encounter Jesus and genuinely feel welcomed, safe and included, while upholding Anglican doctrine and teaching. I hope we can have honest and respectful conversations about difficult issues without losing sight of our shared faith in Christ or the importance of treating one another with grace and dignity.

I have also seen through my work across different churches in the deanery the confidence and hope that comes from a diocese which is committed to the parish system and to maintaining clergy numbers. I believe there is real value in learning from what is working here in Blackburn Diocese and sharing that experience more widely. I support the principles behind the Save the Parish network and would like to see the strength and importance of parish ministry reflected in the Church's national decision-making.

Why I am Asking for Your Vote

Mission and Evangelism

I am passionate about helping people encounter Jesus and have practical experience of putting mission into action. From our Narnia Experience and Easter Experience to working with local schools and community events, I have helped turn ideas into reality. I really value our strong ecumenical partnership with Hope Methodist Church in New Longton, working together on village-wide events at Easter and Christmas. One of our highlights has been our Advent Windows project, with 24 windows lighting up the village. I have seen firsthand how creative, accessible outreach can open doors and start conversations about faith. I want to bring this practical experience to General Synod to help encourage and support churches to be confident in sharing the Gospel.

Communication

I have developed a strong interest in church communication, including managing our parish website, magazine, and social media channels. I understand the importance of communicating clearly and creatively, particularly when trying to reach people who may have little or no connection with the church. I believe we have an incredible story to tell, and we need to be confident in telling it.

Parish, Deanery, and Community Experience

My experience as a PCC member, Deanery Synod Representative, Vicar's PA, and PA to the Area Dean has given me a broad understanding of parish and deanery life. Being a governor at Hutton Grammar School has also given me valuable experience in education, governance, and working alongside people from the wider community. I would bring all of these distinct perspectives to General Synod.

I want to be someone who truly listens to the people and churches around me and ensures their voices are heard. Through my work in parish and deanery life, I see both the challenges and the exciting things happening in our churches. I would love to bring those experiences to General Synod while helping people locally understand and engage with what is happening nationally.

Thank you for taking the time to read my election address. I would be very happy to hear from you if you have any questions or would like to chat about why I am standing. I would be incredibly grateful if you would consider giving me your first preference vote, or your highest available preference.

It would be a real privilege to represent the Diocese of Blackburn at General Synod.