

ROBIN EASTOE

Proposed by Paul Jones, Seconded by Peter Norman



I am Team Rector of Heavitree with St Mary Steps an appointment I took up in 2008. Before that I was exclusively in the Chelmsford Diocese where I was brought up and was ordained in 1978. I served two curacies before becoming Vicar of St Francis, Barkingside, and then Vicar of St Margaret's, Leigh on Sea. I am proud to have only ever been a parish priest.

I am Area Dean of Christianity (quite a title!) and was also an area dean in Chelmsford. I have just been re-elected to the Diocesan Synod. I am an assessor for the DDO, on the Board of Patronage, and on the Children and Youth support group for the diocese. I am also involved in Ministerial Development Reviews. However these things are incidental to being a parish priest, which I have been ever since ordination; I believe it is vital to have ordinary parish priests on Synod.

A big part of my ministry is to be involved in schools. As well as being a Governor in our Church Academy, I, together with other the clergy of the Team take weekly assemblies in three schools and regular assemblies in three others. We have developed a '30 minute service' which has been successful in attracting families and children.

I am married with three children in their 20's. My chief interests are watching football, cricket (I play occasionally for the Diocesan Cricket Team), reading, storytelling and listening to folk music. I also enjoy cooking though in an unadventurous way.

Church of England. When Synod rejected the first proposals for Women Bishops in July 2013 it seemed to everyone that we were monumentally failing in love. People from both sides of the argument were at each other's throats and the whole church scene was unedifying. Since then a far more positive atmosphere has come over us. The Bishops' Five Principles which seek to enable us all to flourish in one church seem to me to be a vision I can identify with, and I would support them wholeheartedly.

Church Schools. These will be under attack in the next few years. We should defend and promote them for the quality of education they provide, for the service to the Community which they enshrine, and for their witness to the spiritual needs of young people. Children - and indeed teenagers - love stories and we should resist calls to banish bible stories from schools, whether the schools be Church Schools or Community Schools. More generally teachers are often easy targets for politicians, the media and parents; we should be firmly on the side of the teaching profession.

Mission. We need to invest in mission. Heavitree parish has three large estates and it is very noticeable how few of their residents are numbered among our congregations or indeed anyone's congregations. While I rejoice in the growth

of many churches, we must resource mission in the estates of our towns and cities, even if growth might be slower and less spectacular. In so many parishes there are whole areas which are untouched by any church. We must spread the love of Jesus and faith in him even when this will prove most difficult.

Countryside. I have never served in the country but visit it often. I notice how often villages show every sign of decline and poverty. Country churches are often served by tiny congregations and by clergy coming from another village several miles away. We need to review how we minister in rural areas.

Bible. I feel that too often we are deciding what we want to do and then seeing if we can find a verse or two to give it Scriptural backing. I believe we should be studying the bible to allow it to set our agendas. This is an important part of being faithful to God.

Sex and the Pilling Report. This will be a very difficult area for the Church to tackle. The facilitated conversations seem a positive way forward. We do need to listen to each other, and to be honest in our disagreements. However for all that both bible and tradition have a definite sense of sexual morality and we must beware of giving the impression that we are losing faith in these two sources of revelation.

If you agree with me on some or all of these points, can I ask you to give your first choice vote.

I am happy to talk about my views to anyone - 01392 677150.

Robin Eastoe