

Ben Otley

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Dear Elector,

My name is Ben Otley. I am 30 years old. I am standing for election to represent the Diocese of Exeter on the Church of England's General Synod as a Lay Member. I strongly believe that a wide and diverse range of representatives is essential for the future of the Church of England.

I am proud to be a young Christian that is from a working-class background, I feel that my background would bring some diversity to the portfolio of the synod.

Personal Details and Employment

I was born and brought up in Sheffield, my Christian faith developed when I was a scout in which the scout group attended the local church occasionally. I made the personal choice to attend church more frequently. This led to becoming confirmed and fostering an interest in Christian Ministry. Whilst I lived in Sheffield, I was a licensed Lay Reader.

I come from a working-class background and attended state primary and secondary school. Whilst not naturally academically gifted I chose to live away from home for college and study countryside management and conservation.

I now live and work in Plymouth and am employed across 2 Plymouth parishes as a 'Lay Anglo-Catholic Mission Development Minister'. My employment gives me a daily picture of how the church currently all those who we minister to, along with giving me the chance to see how the church needs to shape in the future. I have a desire to ensure that churches can continually improve how we serve and minister to those in our communities.

Meeting the needs of Our Diocese and all Gods people

Despite there being many positive initiatives across our diocese that we hope will develop to positive results we are still seeing declines in local church attendance along with many vacancies in parishes. It is now time to take action to stop further decline.

I will vote for a strong network of Christian ministry to be present in every community. I want to see vacant parishes filled and lay ministry roles created.

I live in Keyham which is an area of Plymouth which sadly hit the national news recently following the shooting tragedy. As a Christian Lay worker living and working in the Keyham, I was able to provide immediate ministry alongside the parish priest.

A Christian Ministry presence such as this in local communities is essential for the future of our churches but cannot be fully effective without ministry teams of lay and ordained in every community.

The Diocese website states the following quote which I provided in an interview whilst ministering to the Keyham Community "Ben Otley, a licensed lay worker for the parish, said "I think what has happened highlights the importance of a parish church in a community to support that community." <https://exeter.anglican.org/keyham-parish-priest-prays-for-victims-and-pledges-mental-health-support/>

Further areas which I am keen to contribute towards at synod

- Developing opportunities to enable **Children, Teenagers, Families and Young adults** to be brought to faith and become valued members of our worshipping communities.
- Enabling the church to **Reach Out** to those on the edges. Especially to those who face **Poverty, isolation, hardships**.
- Maintaining positive working relationships between all traditions within our Diocese, enabling us to grow in faith and number as one. I want this to happen by maintaining continual support of **‘The Five Guiding Principles’**.
- Voting for correct measures that ensure **safeguarding** is of importance.
- I want to **‘Maintain the seal of the Confessional’**. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is an important ministry of the Church. This should be fully respected along with encouragement of proper teaching about this Sacrament. The Sacrament of Reconciliation can be both **Pastoral and Missional**.

Thoughts from another young Christian

Hannah Fleming-Hill whom I have worked alongside in Plymouth writes-

‘I have worked with Ben over the last two years within my role at Transforming Plymouth Together supporting him with the Feast of Fun project delivering food and fun to families during the holidays prior covid then throughout the pandemic.

I worked with lots of churches and different teams but would regularly spend time with Ben as he was always willing to go above and beyond the requirements for our project. He understood his community, the families and the challenges they faced and would be sensitive to those needs when planning support. Ben also offered support to our charity, happy to help with moving food, setting up activities or with our Christmas service.

I have learned so much from Ben, about faith, life and what it means to be Christian. He is continually serving others and putting others needs above his own, he is kind, wise and an exemplary display of faith in action.’

Summary

I finish by summarising what I feel will make me a suitable candidate to stand for the Diocese of Exeter

1. **I am a young Christian that has an enthusiasm to see the church flourish.**
2. **I have to skills to work with and listen to a diverse group of people and opinions.**
3. **I commit to ensuring churches in Devon are given the best opportunities possible to grow in faith and number.**

A first or high preference vote makes all the difference. Please remember all the General Synod candidate in your prayers.

Should you wish to ask any questions about this address or anything else relating to how I intend to represent our diocese on General Synod please feel free to contact me.

Yours in Christ

B. Otley

I wish to thank to Mrs Susan Way (Plymouth City Deanery) who has kindly agreed to be my proposer and to Mrs Anneliese Barrell (Plymouth City Deanery) who has kindly agreed to be my seconder.