



Vivien Southall 2023 General Synod

Nominated by **Simon Friend** -General Synod Member

Seconded by **Annie Jefferies** – Former Chair of House of Laity, Diocesan Synod

Dear Elector

I am writing to ask you to vote in the upcoming election of a lay representative from Exeter to the General Synod. I live and worship in Kentisbeare, a small village in Mid Devon where my husband Andrew and I have lived since 1993. We have two beautiful daughters in their 30's, both married to wonderful women. I became a Christian when I was 13, since which all of my life choices have been made through prayer and trusting in God's guidance for me. The Bible is central to my faith, I continue to develop my Biblical knowledge, considering the context in which the Bible was written, how it speaks to society today and what the words mean for my life. My personal church work has been at grassroots level, I am now in a position to commit and to be involved in a new way. I am confident that I will have much which can serve the broader Church through General Synod and will now have time and ability to engage prayerfully and thoughtfully with the complex issues of the wider Church. I am committed to listening to different views and be involved in respectful discussions with others. Do get in contact with me if you would like to find out more about me, and please vote for whoever you feel will advocate for the issues that are important to you. Thank you for taking the time to read this statement.

Vivien

My church work includes

- Children's and youth work since I was 14.
- Homegroup member from 14 and a leader for much of the time.
- Leading Marriage preparation, enrichment and parenting courses
- Leading a Living in Love and Faith course and follow up sessions
- Prayer ministry

My life outside of Church...

- Primary school teacher, 1985-2007. London, Swindon, Broadhembury and Exeter.

- Set up and ran Kentisbeare Preschool 1994-1997
- Relationship Educator for Mid Devon Community Trust (MDCFT), 2000 – ongoing
- Lecturer in Education at Plymouth University, 2009-2019
- Education Doctorate 2018- present (about to complete).
- Carer for my mother who had dementia 2017 – 2021
- I also enjoy reading, knitting, gardening, the gym, running and walking my dogs.

'I have known Viv and her family for nearly 20 years. Viv is wonderfully energetic, gets on really well with people, has tremendous experience in education and working with couples and families to help people flourish and come through difficult times.'

Simon Friend

My work and church life has been strongly connected to working with children, families and supporting those who need someone to walk alongside them, issues central to the Church.

SUPPORTING FAMILIES - In 2000 I was asked to by a group of local churches to set up MDCFT to run marriage preparation and enrichment, and parenting courses. This is now extended to offer appointments to those with relationship concerns of any kind, supporting people to understand their relationships better and make decisions about moving forward. We also have student counsellors on placements. This service seen as Jesus' unconditional love in the community and is available to anyone seeking support and reflects the values embedded in the Church of England's 'Love Matters' report 2023.

CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES

- Through teaching and lecturing I understand the lives of children, families and young adults, the joys and the stresses. As an Education Lecturer I was able to visit and support student teachers in a wide variety of primary schools and have a good knowledge of education in the Southwest as well as how individuals in school are impacted by national policy. This would give me an insight at General Synod level. I believe that schools should be about more than academic achievement, promoting 'spiritual, physical, intellectual, emotional, moral and social development of children and young people' (P2, Church of England Vision for Education, 2016). My subject specialism was Religious Education, and I am committed to the importance of this subject, widening children's understanding and respect for the ways in which faith is manifested.

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SEND/INCLUSION/NEURODIVERSITY -

Part of my MA(Ed) enabled me to gain the Special Educational Needs Coordinator Award, developing my perception of barriers to education and society. Teaching, and my work with MDCFT has often involved advocating for people with ADHD or autism. The lack of information about how to support neurodiverse couples led to my doctoral research into the long-term romantic relationships of autistic/nonautistic couple relationships. I would like to be part of Synod to be involved in discussions about what in Church culture disenfranchises marginalised and minority groups. I hope and pray for a Church and society that is truly accessible to all and enables everyone to develop a relationship with Christ that is life long and continues to deepen. I support Prayers of Blessing for those in same sex relationships but respect the right of clergy to follow their conscience in this matter. We need a Church that values diversity, including respecting each other's consciences.

RURAL AND URBAN PARISHES -

As a family we have been involved in a large, vibrant evangelical Church for 30 years and valued the spirit led worship and outward focus on serving the community. Currently I am a member of a small village church. I recognise the importance of both types of church to the ongoing purposes of Jesus' commission to support the Christian family and be a witness in the wider community. I am aware of the strengths of both rural and town parishes but also the challenges, and if elected to General Synod would vote with understanding of the impact of decisions for churches in these different situations.