



Kerry Gilbert for General Synod

Plymouth Deanery - Candidate for the House of Laity, General Synod

Proposed by Jenni Coates

LLM and Lay Chair Shirwell Deanery

As an LLM with a background in Special Education, I am delighted to support Kerry to represent the laity on General Synod. We need a strong voice to speak up for all those who are marginalised in any way, to ensure they know they are fully included, and that their place in the Kingdom of God is fully recognised and acknowledged. I am confident that Kerry will shine a light on and speak for all these people and strive to give us a voice in General Synod.

Seconded by Ken Ball – LLM and Lay Chair Woodleigh Deanery

I've known Kerry over the last couple of years during her time as Diocesan Lay Chair. She has done an excellent job of organising meetings of the Deanery Lay Chairs and I know that her heart is in representing the voice of laity within the structures of the Anglican Church. She will make a great representative for Devon on General Synod.

Dear Elector,

Thank you for taking the time to read this and whether you decide to vote for me or not, please ensure you do vote in this election – it is important to have broad representation of candidates and views from our diocese.

Why am I standing?

I have been a churchwarden for nine and a half years and have served on deanery and diocesan synod, including as diocesan lay chair, and the Church of England matters to me. I love the fact that as a Church, it upholds the right to be diverse, holding in tension the different views and standpoints of many different people. It is my firm belief that this makes it truly a place where Christ can be followed and represented in our communities.

It is of paramount importance to me that all voices are heard, from across the diocese – from the isolated rural churches at the centre of the community to the large urban gathered churches that draw Christians from across the

city or county – all are important, regardless of tradition or outworking of their faith. All are loved by God and thus all have to have a voice at the heart of its governance. I am always ready to listen and to hear about the difficulties faced and to feed them into the wider debate. That is why I stand for inclusion at all levels including: women in ministry, ethnic and cultural groups, neurodivergent groups, those with different learning needs and the LGBTQ+ community.

Learning from difference

As an educationalist for almost 30 years, I have found that learning happens most, and at its best in diverse communities and settings. When surrounded by like minds we become echo chambers of our own fiercely held beliefs and opinions. It is only by listening to others and trying to see things from different angles and perspectives that we can open our minds to better ways of working to improve life for everyone. I base my thesis on the teachings of Paul in his letters to the Romans (Romans 12) and the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 12) that we

are all contributors to the body of Christ with our different and wonderfully awesome gifts and skills. One type of person does not build the Kingdom, we all have our place – gifted from God, who loves us all equally. It is through the voices and ideas of others that creativity of thought to solve big issues can be realised.

We are better together.

My own story of faith

I was born in Leeds to a working class family with working class values. My mother was a secretary and my father a welder. My mother had been a church goer since childhood and my father came to faith rather later in life, when he felt he was being watched over as his car's wheel bounced past him on a bend as he drove to collect us from church one Sunday morning, he was confirmed the following year. It was he who instilled in me a sense of fairness – and that not everyone had an equitable share of what was fair!

I went to church schools between the ages of 9 and 17 and there I learned some valuable lessons about social accountability and good stewardship, which were woven throughout the curriculum, not just in religious education. I learnt about my responsibilities to others, not just to myself and immediate family. As I ventured into the big wide world and university, my faith deepened and grew. Studying in Wales, I learned more about the broader church and the outworkings of different expressions, which continued to fascinate me – I love the fact we are different but that we can still support, love and care for one another. As I developed my career in education, my love for different ways of thinking grew further, especially when speaking to students from a broad diversity of backgrounds, cultures, ethnicities, genders and sexualities, as an academic and a pastoral tutor, supporting them through good and difficult times. I feel most at home when listening to others, learning from them and thinking about

how that changes how I think, how I express who I am and who God made me to be. It is this that drives me to stand in this election, to be shaped by listening and feeding into the important debates. I want to see the laity thrive, to see their gifts, skills and vocation fully actualised through lay mission and ministry as well as encouraging those for whom calling is to ordination in the diaconate or priesthood. My role as Head of Formation allows to me to work towards this on the ground and I would relish the chance to take this to the broader reach of the Church of England through representing you at General synod.

My hopes for how Synod will shape the Church in the next quinquennium

I would love to see a Church that can continue to remain broad and inclusive and find ways to work through the divisions that threaten to tear it apart. It is

important for us to be open and honest about what divides us, but in that



to understand that there is more to hold us together than push us apart. I am passionate about working towards pathways for lay leadership working alongside the clergy to ensure all are able to fulfil their vocation, in whatever ministry best suits their gifts, skills and individual sense of calling. We are all held together by the message of enduring love and hope in the resurrection. We are an Easter people and Alleluia is our song.

Please give me your first or high preference vote if you believe my statement resonates with how Exeter Diocese should be represented at General Synod. Feel free to contact me on 07765464846 or kerry@plymstockandhooe.org