



**GENERAL SYNOD ELECTIONS 2021  
FOR HOUSE OF LAITY,  
DIOCESE OF OXFORD**

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**Background:-**

Born in Uganda, I grew up within two different cultures, as an African raised in the UK. My paternal grandfather never went to school yet successfully built a substantial banana plantation in Uganda; my maternal grandfather served as a Canon in the (Protestant) Church in Uganda. My parents sent me to boarding school in England from the age of 6, to give me the best education they could. I attended Sunningdale Prep School, then Eton College before reading Classics/Jurisprudence at New College, Oxford. Called to the Bar in 1985, I have been a practising barrister for over 30 years, specialising predominantly in discrimination law. In November 2020 I finally became a British citizen under the Windrush Scheme so now have dual citizenship: Ugandan/British. Married to Rose (Kenyan/British) and have two sons, Ollie (24) and Josh (22).

**Christian walk/ service:**

Baptised in Uganda as a baby, confirmed at 15 whilst at Eton. I confess it has always troubled me as to why there should be so many different denominations of the Christian Church when there should be something distinctive about calling oneself a 'Christian', which we all share in common and unites us as one Church. After burying my father in Uganda in accordance with tribal tradition, the elders of my tribe when appointing me heir gave me a bark cloth, a spear and a Bible. This prompted me to start taking my faith more seriously. When I got back to London in 1991 I joined the 'Open to Question' course run by All Souls Church, Langham Place to help me understand better what it meant to be a 'Christian' pure and simple. I went on to become an active member of the church; became involved in 'soup runs' for the homeless organised by The Clubhouse, a community-based church serving the local community in Fitzrovia in particular reaching out to the Bangladeshi community, and was later appointed Chair of their management committee which could not have been a more diverse group.

Since moving out of London I have been an active member of every church I have attended, serving as leader (and speaker) on Alpha courses for many years at St James Church, Gerrards Cross and on Recovery from Divorce and Separation courses run by Goldhill Baptist Church, Chalfont St Peter. For 12 yrs I served as head coach to a church football team at St James, to give youngsters the chance to play football on a Saturday in the Chiltern Church Junior Football League so they would not miss out on sport by coming to church on a Sunday.

Currently attend St Mary's Church, Maidenhead, member of PCC, having previously served on PCC for six years; also member of Deanery Synod; have enjoyed leading and assisting in the organisation of evangelistic events; continue to be involved with the youth ministry, particularly among 14 to 18 yr olds; have always assisted (in London and elsewhere) in leading the congregational singing. Recently, have co-authored a paper on The Gospel and Race, distributed to the whole church family. In the City, have been longstanding member of the Lawyers Christian Fellowship, also regularly involved in lunchtime ministries, both as part of the Fleet Street Talks and with the Protestant Truth Society.

## Why I am standing

Let's face it, the Church of England is in real crisis! The next five years will be critical in determining whether it will survive or fragment and wither away. Numbers are dwindling fast and many churches have lost connection with the younger generation. The Church, as we know, is not built out of bricks and mortar but *people* who make up the body of Christ. We should all be fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, and listening to His voice.

Hear what He says at the end of Matthew's gospel: Go and make disciples of *all nations*. Hear the final instructions He gave to Simon Peter at the end of John's gospel: *Feed* my lambs, *take care* of my sheep and *feed* my sheep. He did not say, *abuse* my sheep; nor did He add, "and, by the way, focus on feeding those who are **white, male, heterosexual, middle class, adults of Anglo-Saxon heritage**" or words to that effect. No, Jesus was interested in and cared for all people.

I love the fact that John recounted Jesus' encounter with the Samaritan woman by the well straight after Jesus' encounter with an upstanding member of the Jewish Establishment (John 3 and 4). Jesus also loved children, famously saying, "Suffer little children to come unto me" (Matt. 19:14).

I accept that there are many important issues which the Church can usefully contribute to, such as the national housing crisis, climate change, ethical investments and so on. But, the Church desperately needs to put its own house in order, first and foremost. If it does not, and if it fails to engage with young people, church membership can only continue to fall until there are few left to debate any of the other issues. The Archbishops commissioned a report 'Coming Home' on tackling the housing crisis, which is all well and good but on the Church's current path there may be nobody left in the Church to come home to in a few years. It is, also, wonderful that a Lead Bishop for Environmental Affairs has been appointed. But, the recent report 'From Lament to Action' reveals just how far the Church has strayed from its Great Commission in tackling racism within the Church itself. The lack of progress on that front is shocking, the inaction over so many years is scary and depressing.

It is hard to believe that the Archbishops' Anti-Racism Taskforce reviewed over 20 reports presented to General Synod relating to racial justice, identified over 160 recommendations since publication of 'Faith in the City' in 1985 and yet latest figures reveal: out of 111 bishops, just 5 were from UK Minority Ethnic or Global Majority Heritage – what? – less than 4% of stipendiary clergy were from BAME background – really? When I attended my first deanery synod meeting earlier this year on Zoom I could not help but notice that the white sheep outnumbered the black by roughly 49:1. The Church has got to change direction!

## What I have to offer

I can put my legal experience and skills to good use as the General Synod is primarily a legislative body and debating chamber. I also have relevant knowledge and expertise in discrimination law. For several years I have been training members of my own profession on behalf of the Bar Council on Equality & Diversity Awareness. I personally know what it is like to experience racism in the UK within my own profession and at large. I am passionate about my faith and totally committed to combatting all forms of discrimination. I believe there is a lot that I can bring to the work of General Synod in terms of my legal and practical experience. I hate to see the Church as the object of ridicule. 'Living in Love & Faith' is, clearly, another important issue that requires very delicate and sensitive handling if it is not to divide the Church. I want to use all of my knowledge and experience to serve the Church and to help build it up into a body that I can be proud of and, above all, one that truly honours and glorifies Christ. It is crucial for the Church to focus on ensuring that it is not restricted to a narrow group when Christ's flock should be more inclusive, made up of diverse sheep, of different ages and backgrounds, and from all nations, all equally under one Good Shepherd. I have not served on the General Synod before. I think that some fresh blood with new energy could do it a lot of good. If you would give me the opportunity, I shall be greatly honoured and wholly committed to represent the Diocese of Oxford as one of your lay representatives.