

It is a privilege to be part of the Church of England and to offer for a place on General Synod. I have been ordained for twenty-five years, have served in three Dioceses and been a member of Diocesan Synod in each one. I have been Area Dean in Canterbury Diocese and now in Oxford (just coming to the end of my five-year term). I am currently Vicar of St Michael at the North Gate, the city church of Oxford. Our doors are always open, and our services mostly, but not exclusively, follow a traditional liturgical pattern. We are grateful to God for growth, especially among young people, in recent times.

What I would hope to bring to Synod falls into five broad categories.

The first is a catch-all, I pray that that the Church of England would honour Christ in all that we do and that we would be mindful of our calling to prayer, love, holiness, justice and integrity.

The second is a desire to encourage a renewing of confidence in the Church of England, and to be thankful for its strengths. We should aspire to affirm, resource and support the Parish system, being serious about our commitment to an Anglican presence in every local community. We should value the theological richness and wisdom of our liturgical tradition, whilst enjoying creativity of new ideas, and appreciate the balanced robustness of the Elizabethan settlement. (I came to faith in Christ as a child and later became an Anglican: to some extent I have the zeal of a convert!)

The third is a passion for discipleship. I have spent my career in teaching or parish ministry, have been a governor in five schools (currently Chair in one), am “Chaplain to the Chaplains” for an international school network and lead on a summer residential Christian holiday. I have written non-fiction and fiction designed to help people grow in faith and understanding, and a Grove booklet: “Help, there’s a school in my parish.” I am pleased to see the current emphasis given to work among young people and would wish to see this done well, and funds distributed sensibly.

The fourth is a desire to affirm rigorous thinking (my apologies if I sound pompous and pedantic at this point!). Synodical government carries a serious responsibility; the Church of England is a complex organisation rightly full of people of vision and passion; sometimes Synod needs to be the slightly annoying voice asking: “May we just check we have done all the necessary thinking?” This is not to block vision and passion, but rather to focus and enhance them; our heritage of careful thought as we consider scripture, tradition and reason is a blessing, not a barrier. Synod has a particular responsibility to love God with mind as well as heart.

The fifth would be a plea that Synod constantly has in mind the reference point of being a blessing on the ministry of the people of God. Local PCCs should be in the habit of rejoicing when Synod meets, trusting that the outcomes will lead to encouragement and enabling of local mission.

Whatever the result of this election, I join my prayers with yours, and may God's kingdom grow and the Church of England flourish.

Anthony Buckley. April 2024