

Maria Haywood

Dear Elector,



I am a 62-year-old woman, with a career in financial media and marketing. I worship in my parish church of St John the Baptist, Kingston Bagpuize with Southmoor, in the Abingdon Deanery.

I was brought up an Anglican and became a believing Christian in my late twenties. Since then, I have worshipped in a variety of Anglican churches: One a large 'gathered' London church, the others local London churches with very culturally diverse congregations. I have also had the experience of being a member of a small non-conformist church, where I was the Treasurer for several years.

Now I am in a small, very active village church catering for a range of worship styles. It is a joy to see how embedded the church is in the life of the village and the opportunities for outreach this gives us. I really value the way the Church of England accommodates so many diverse cultures and personalities – people who are united simply by their love of God and their desire to grow more Christ-like every day.

What I hope to offer Synod:

Strategic thinking: I have always had a keen interest in politics and current affairs, and enjoy following economic and world news. On top of that, I believe, I am blessed with strong lateral-thinking and problem-solving abilities. If I were elected to Synod, I would hope to be able to bring my experience in strategic planning and insight to find solutions to the many challenges facing the Church today, from social to financial issues.

Communications skills: I have excellent communication skills, developed over a career of presenting marketing and communications strategy to major financial institutions worldwide. I am used to working in teams and committees, as well as to pitching business solutions to large audiences. These skills will help me to contribute to the workings of Synod and enable me to manage any challenges that arise.

I also hope this experience will enable me to assist the Church's communications to its wider audiences. I am a firm believer in timely, open, and honest dialogue and I will commit to feeding-back and being available to you, my electorate, in the Oxford diocese.

Love for marginalised and disadvantaged communities: I feel strongly that for the Church of England to be credible in what we teach, we must follow Jesus' example of love and care for all those struggling or marginalised in our society. My years volunteering at an

evening soup kitchen in North London taught me to see and value the guests as fellow children of God. I should like to see the Church of England demonstrate good stewardship of their resources by supporting initiatives within these communities, and having a clear voice on these issues.

Active involvement: I believe in engaging in the debate, rather than criticising from the sidelines. However, I feel that in the world today, debate is hampered because there is a lack of interest in any view other than one's own. Not listening to or caring about others, prevents effective decision-making, as individuals seek to push exclusively their own positions. I fear this could ultimately cause the break-up of the Church of England. So, if elected as a lay member of Synod, I would serve diligently and compassionately, fully committed to supporting and strengthening the institutions of the Church.

About me:

I moved to Oxfordshire from London when I married and retired from my career in financial marketing just three years ago. Since then, among other things, I have thrown myself into the life of the village church: I am the PCC Secretary, co-run a home group, do some one-to-one discipleship, am on the Fete Committee and support all the other church-run village events. In previous churches, I have been the treasurer, a children's teacher and a youth leader.

I am a proud aunt to thirteen, mostly adult, nephews and nieces and four great-ones, and enjoy being part of their young lives. I particularly love being active in the countryside, enjoying the pleasure of God's creation whether walking, gardening, working my allotment or even skiing. I have been truly fortunate to have travelled to remote and mountainous parts of the world – places of rugged beauty and simplicity, where people live much harder lives than most of us in the UK.

Finally, as a survivor of domestic violence, I am very aware of just how much God loves me, cares for me, and values my life. I do not always feel that I know what his plan for me is, but I know that nearly 30 years later, I am now more equipped to serve him and better able to respond to his call. I believe my experience enables me to empathise with people and will help me to use my gifts to contribute to Synod in an understanding and loving way, for the service of the Church and God's Kingdom.

Thank you for reading this. Please would you give me your first preference vote or failing that, the highest you are able to give me?

Yours faithfully

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