

Jeremy Lasman

Standing for the House of Laity of General Synod

Nominated by Professor Helen King, General Synod member

Seconded by Peter Barrett, General Synod member



Thank You

Thank you for the invaluable work that you do to govern and shape our Church. I hope that you will feel that I have a set of skills and experience to provide valuable input to this important work.

Who am I?

I am 63, and have lived in Witney, West Oxfordshire for the past 7 years. I was born and brought up in London, and have spent most of my working life there, with spells also in Manchester and New York. I am a highly experienced Programme Director, having run multi million pound change programmes for Barclays, RSA and Lloyds Banking Group, Towards the end of my (paid) career, I was a partner in a Management Consultancy, specialising in strategy, organisational design and change management, working at Board level with clients including major PLCs, Government Departments and Universities. I would contribute my experience in enabling complex organisations to identify and implement structural change when serving on General Synod.

I stopped working for money upon moving to Witney, and I now serve as Warden and Treasurer for the Parish of Witney, and Chair of Governors for two primary schools in the town. I am divorced and have two grown up daughters, with whom I remain close.

My Faith

My mother was Italian, my father a fourth generation Jew from the East End of London. As such, I'm an 'Oy Vey, Maria', but baptised and confirmed in the Roman Catholic church. I came to a living faith at University, and worshipped in conservative evangelical Anglican, Baptist, and Independent churches for over twenty years. I have served in many different roles in these churches, including as a home group leader, team leader for a church plant, worship leader, preacher and PCC member.

I came out as gay and divorced in my early forties, and so left the church, fearing a lack of acceptance. However, having moved to Witney, I started worshipping at the parish church of St Mary the Virgin, an inclusive Anglican church, with a modern catholic tradition. My experience of the immeasurable love of God has deepened hugely as a result of my acceptance into this community, and also through the discipline of regular observance of the Daily Office and in the receiving of the sacrament of Holy Communion.

I share these brief summaries to illustrate the breadth of experience that I would bring should I be fortunate enough to win your vote in the forthcoming election.

Some Convictions

There are a number of personal convictions which would frame my input to debates at General Synod:

- **Vision:** we should seek to cherish and *nurture the image of Christ* in everyone

- **Inclusion:** the church should be a place where *everyone is accepted* for who and what they are, irrespective of their faith, or lack of it
- **Growth:** church growth is driven by a combination of the desire to *grow deeper in our relationship with God* and an *outward focus* in the service of our wider community
- **Parish:** the nature of the Church of England confers upon it a cherished status, creating opportunities for it to *serve in every local community* through the parish system
- **Listening:** most issues are rarely black or white, and in order to engage in constructive debate, it is important to *step into the other persons shoes*, to try to see alternative perspectives.

Some Challenges

If elected, I would bring my skills and experience to bear to help the church address some of the challenges that it currently faces, for example:

- While preserving the benefits of the parish system, we need to *evolve the organisational structure of the church*, in order to respond to the pressures many parishes face in terms of their finances, membership, regulatory requirements, upkeep of buildings and fabric, sustainability etc.
- Irrespective of ‘opt in’ or ‘opt out’, as the *Prayers of Love and Faith* are introduced, how do we present the church as a place of *acceptance and inclusion*, especially to those who have, hitherto, felt alienated from it?
- How should the church respond, in policy, practice and with compassion to the *increasing fragmentation of society*, the positive and negative impacts of social media, and the move towards single issue politics?
- Our *ageing population*, reflected in many congregations, provides both opportunities and challenges. We need to find more creative ways to *leverage their wisdom* and experience.

Many of the challenges faced by the church are interdependent, and sometimes the potential options to address one might run contrary to the solutions of another. I am sure that you are very aware of this tension, and the need for clarity and holistic thinking as such issues are debated at General Synod. As I have already said, I hope to bring my strategic and change management skills to bear to make a positive contribution these debates.

Rev Canon Toby Wright, Team Rector, Witney Benefice

‘I commend Jeremy to you. He is a person of deep faith, who also has a wealth of experience in strategy and change management. With a wide experience of differing styles of churches, he is a great public speaker, and draws people along with him. Jeremy has much to offer to the work of General Synod and I warmly encourage you to vote for him to represent Oxford Diocese.’

Finally

Thank you, once again, for taking the time to read my address. I hope that it has given you enough flavour of who I am, what I believe and what I would contribute to enable you to give me your first preference vote. Please do contact me about anything; I would be very happy to hear from you.

Jeremy Lasman, Jeremy.l@witneyparish.org.uk (n.b. don't miss out the '!')