Diocese of Oxford
General Synod Casual Vacancy Elections 2024

Questions to Candidates

Voters were given the opportunity to pose questions which might be put to the candidates, relating to any matters on which they believed a representative of the diocese on General Synod might wish to express a view.

Several suggestions and suggested themes were received, and I have selected Four, as set out below.

I am now inviting all candidates (clergy and lay) to consider the questions and, if they wish, to submit written responses. No candidate is obliged to provide answers to any or all of these, but any written responses any candidate wishes to make will then be posted on the diocesan website.

Please note that if a candidate does not provide any answers, the relevant part of the website will be marked "none provided" and if a candidate chooses not to answer every question, the words "no answer provided" will be inserted for that particular question.

The website will also make clear that this is entirely optional. It is an additional opportunity for you to engage with voters if you wish to do so. I reserve the right to remove any response which might reasonably be considered offensive or prejudicial (though I do not expect that I shall need to do so).

A word limit has been set for your replies of ***120 words per question***. Additional words will be cut from the final submission but you could, of course, give a shorter answer.

Please return your completed form to doliver@wslaw.co.uk and copied to sleader@wslaw.co.uk, by **5pm on Tuesday 14 May 2024**. Your submissions will be posted on the Diocesan website, with your Election Address and Video Presentation, on Thursday 16 May 2024 at 5.00 pm.

Darren Oliver
Presiding Officer for General Synod Election
9 May 2024

Name of Candidate (please enter name in full)	***Mark Reginald Johnson***

Questions and Replies

Question 1:	What are you views on the 'Future of Church Safeguarding Report' by Professor Alexis Jay released in February 2024?
Reply: 120 word limit applies	***As the body of Christ in our world we should be loving, caring, honest, responsible, and ready to face unpleasant truths. As an institution we need to be open, transparent, consistent, and accountable. We should move swiftly to implement the recommendations of the Jay report. Too***

	many people have been hurt and are being hurt by the church's response to safeguarding. ***We need to remove church considerations from the safeguarding process, bring ourselves into line with national standards, and move swiftly to ensure that people are at the core of all we do.*** ***Independent institutions will ensure that high quality care and management of safeguarding becomes, and remains, central to the life of the church.***

Question 2:	What is your position on 'Living in Love and Faith' and on the inclusivity of LGBTQ+ people in the Church?
Reply: 120 word limit applies	***Living in Love and Faith is a small step towards inclusivity in the church, I believe we should welcome this, and look to move swiftly towards an inclusive, open, and loving church which welcomes everyone regardless of who they are, whom they love, what they have done or do, and how they express their sexuality and gender.*** ***I believe we need to hear Jesus' message of love and equality. He welcomed all people into his world, and we should do the same. I believe that we are a better, stronger church when we accept diversity and difference. I long for a world and a church where we no longer think in terms of gender, ethnicity, or sexual difference.***

Question 3:	Noting the Five Guiding Principles in the House of Bishop's 2014 Declaration on the Ministry of Bishops and Priests (under which the diocesan bishop can make arrangements for pastoral and sacramental provision for churches who cannot accept the ministry of bishops and priest who are women), would you support similar arrangements being made for clergy and churches on matters arising from 'Living in Love and Faith'?
Reply: 120 word limit applies	***To be succinct, No.*** ***The Guiding Principles, despite synods best intentions, institutionalise gender discrimination. Holding disparate church members in unity appears to be more important than stating theological truths. We state that all orders of ministry are open to all; and yet make provision for those who do not believe this.*** ***We need to stand up for, and clearly state, our belief that all peoples are equal, regardless of gender, sexuality, or any other so-called difference – synod needs to ensure that we have structures, principles, and doctrines which reflect this truth. We cannot hold, within our doctrinal structures, two incompatible theological ideas, whilst attempting to present a credible face to the world.***

	We need to stand for the truth.

Question 4:	Bearing in mind the Diocesan Synod's March 2024 resolution endorsing the need to significantly increase our engagement with young people, families and schools, how would your membership of General Synod help with this?
Reply: 120 word limit applies	***Focusing on children and young people is essential because we believe that the Kingdom is here and now. Lobbying for resources, increasing our profile, promoting our success when working with CYP is an essential part of being a representative as is ensuring that the national church resources CYP ministry.*** ***I believe that we need to make the church relevant to CYP, by being a truly, open, honest, inclusive church. Synod must ensure that the church speaks out about things that matter, including Climate change, poverty, discrimination, war; and be Good News. We need to ensure that we speak clear, honest, strong, moral words, becoming the prophetic voice of our nation.*** ***If we speak to CYP's concerns, then they will come!***