



The Revd Canon Dr William Lamb

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Dear colleague,

I am pleased to have this opportunity to introduce myself and explain why I am seeking election to the General Synod for the first time. In brief, I want to tell you about the experience I would bring as one of your representatives, and to explain where I stand on the more immediate issues facing the Church of England. I am most grateful to two parish priests, the Revd Dr Jonathan Lewis-Jong, Vicar of St Mary Magdalen, Oxford, and the Revd Esther Lay, Rector of Wootton with Glympton and Kiddington, who have nominated me.

I Extensive ministerial experience

I bring experience of parochial ministry, cathedral ministry, higher education chaplaincy and theological education. I have also served as an Officiating Chaplain to HM Forces. Ordained in 1995, I have ministered in very different parochial contexts: in town-centre ministry; in a large rural multi-church benefice in Yorkshire; and since 2017 as the Vicar of the University Church of St Mary the Virgin in Oxford.

As a theological educator, I have taught at the College of the Resurrection, Mirfield, on the Northern Ordination Course, and as a tutor for IME Phase 2. For ten years, I worked as a University Chaplain at the University of Sheffield, and also served as a Canon Residentiary of Sheffield Cathedral. Subsequently, I was the Vice-Principal of Westcott House, Cambridge, where I taught New Testament Studies in the ecumenical context of the Cambridge Theological Federation. I taught colleagues from Westcott House, Ridley Hall and ERMIC.

For ten years, I served as a Trustee and then Chair of St Augustine's Foundation, which funds theological education in the Anglican Communion, particularly in the global south. For four years, I served as the Secretary of the Major Churches Network. I currently serve as a Reviewer (Periodic External Reviews) of Theological Education Institutions. A Fellow of Harris Manchester College and an associate member of the Faculty of Theology and Religion in the University of Oxford, I continue to publish in the areas of biblical studies and historical theology.

II The front line is the bottom line

I believe in the value of making ministry and pastoral care available to every parishioner in England. The parish is where the faith is taught, the sacraments are celebrated, people are cared for, and the community is served. This unapologetic witness to our shared hope in Jesus Christ represents the best of Anglicanism. But while I am committed to the parish, I also treasure the experience of having been a Chaplain. We need to cultivate a renewed confidence in our parishes and our chaplaincies, and in resourcing the Church's ministry we need to ensure that the front line is the bottom line. Like many institutions, the Church of England has sought to emulate the corporate world in deploying its resources. The Chote Review identified some important lessons about Strategic Development Funding, but I fear that a pervasive neoliberal ideology, making Dioceses compete for resources, while metrics are fetishized and an ever-burgeoning central bureaucracy grows to measure it all, has created a gaping ecclesiological deficit in our life together. Acts 2.44-45 speaks not of competition, but collaboration and communion. The Magnificat teaches us that a 'preferential option for the poor' is the mark of evangelical justice and charity, and this should drive the apportionment of the abundance we share. I am passionate about supporting front line ministry.

III Formation for ministry and mission

St Paul teaches that ‘The One who calls you is faithful’ (1 Thess. 5.24) and yet numbers currently in theological education are low. I believe that the current crisis in vocations for ordained ministry needs to be addressed urgently. We will need to study the emerging research around recruitment and retention so that we can begin to identify a clear course of action to address the issues. More importantly, we need a renewed commitment to encourage younger vocations. The resourcing of theological education will be a pressing question for the new Synod. I believe that the church needs to invest in its clergy and lay ministers. We need that deep learning which enables us to speak confidently and authentically of the love of Christ and the joy of the gospel.

IV Rebuilding trust and trustfulness

The recent research on trust in the life of the Church of England makes for sober reading. The Synod’s current processes do not always help, but we also live in a culture where controversial questions are increasingly polarized. The gift of Synodality invites us to discern where the Spirit is leading. This takes time. It requires patience and generosity. It arises out of careful reflection in the light of scripture, tradition, and reason, and a shared commitment to the truth. In a world where social media often fuels conflict and disagreement, perhaps we need to begin by speaking well of one another, with kindness and encouragement.

V Living in Love and Faith

The last few years have been dominated by debates about *Living in Love and Faith*. By all accounts, it has been a rather dispiriting exercise. I support *Together for the Church of England*’s commitment to inclusion, and I believe it is essential that any question about church doctrine or discipline is underpinned by a profound listening, a passion for truth, and a shared commitment to catholic order. In the months ahead, the Synod will need to reflect on the kind of provision, which will honour the place of LGBTQ+ clergy and laity in the life of the church, and to do that in a way which respects individual conscience. Meanwhile, further changes are afoot in the reform of wedding laws in England and Wales. Although the government has indicated that Anglican marriage law will be unaffected, it is inevitable that we will need to review our current practice.

VI Making safeguarding a priority

The last few years have seen the publication of numerous reviews, including IICSA, Gibb, Jay, Makin, Scolding and Wilkinson. There have been some positive changes. Nevertheless, progress has been slow. A recent annual report published by INEQE notes resistance to proposals for an independent safeguarding body, arising ‘from a small group of influential senior officers at the diocesan level and certain individuals within the national Church’. This is not acceptable. Given all the reviews and recommendations, I believe that we will not restore confidence in the Church of England’s approach to safeguarding until we have an independent safeguarding body. Parishes will still need Diocesan support to facilitate safer recruitment and training, advise Parish Safeguarding Officers, and manage safeguarding agreements, but we cannot afford the perception that we are marking our own homework to persist any longer.

VII Listening and working with others

I am at heart a pastor, and I am always ready to listen to those I serve and represent. Thank you for reading this. I have written at length because I believe that it is important that you know what someone hoping to represent you on Synod thinks – and although others may disagree, my sense is that complex issues are not always adequately addressed by a few bullet points. For over thirty years, I have served as a priest in the Church of England. I love my role as the Vicar of the University Church, and I am wholehearted in my commitment to the flourishing of the Church of England. I would be humbled and grateful to receive your first vote or a high preference vote in the coming Synodical elections.