

General Synod Election Address 2019

Candidate: Revd Neil Andrew Austin Barber
Vicar of St Giles' Church, Normanton by Derby, since 2001.

Proposer: Revd Lynn Hayler,
Team Vicar of Wingfield, North (St Lawrence), Clay Cross and Pilsley.

Seconder: Revd Matt Barnes,
Rector of St Thomas Brampton, Chesterfield
and Director of Mission & Ministry, Diocese of Derby.



Dear Colleague

I was elected to serve on General Synod 2010-15 but was ready to let others take it on in 2015 so did not stand for election then. I have been encouraged to offer myself again, partly because I already have an understanding of Synod's workings having served in the last Quinquennium and so I could be quickly productive in the short time left in the current Quinquennium. I therefore invite your prayerful consideration of whether you would like me to join the existing clergy representatives.

The Church of England has the amazing privilege of proclaiming the Christian faith afresh in every generation – that faith uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds - making Jesus known in every place, transforming individual lives and whole communities in the process. As the church's national parliament the General Synod is there to support and enable all this; it sets the tone and context for all of our work and we hope and pray it might provide the lead that the whole church needs.

On General Synod I would want it, led by the Holy Spirit,

- to continue to place mission and evangelism at the centre of its agenda, and
- to remain loyal to the inheritance of Christian truth in the church's historic formularies, the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, the Book of Common Prayer and the Ordering of Bishops, Priest and Deacons.

Likewise, led by the Spirit I would want to:

- use my experience in the areas of church growth, organisation, training and finance, and
- have particular concern for the welfare of the clergy and their terms and conditions of service.

I am the Incumbent of an inner-city parish on the south side of Derby City. The local population is 38% Muslim/Sikh, with one mosque directly opposite the church building and another three doors down. The parish is also in the 10% most deprived in the Diocese and the country. I am acutely aware of some of the challenges faced by the church in addressing multiple and diverse sub-cultures in society yet I am convinced of the urgent priority the church must give to this.

Mission and evangelism

- I believe the parish system has been a gift of God to England and the principle of covering the entire country and the cure of all souls is worth working to preserve. However it has limitations in twenty-first century England and so a mixed economy of different styles of churches, neighbourhood and network, for different settings must be made to work. Initiatives such as those expressed in *Mission Shaped Church* and instruments such as Bishop's Mission Orders must surely be widely encouraged.
- I welcome the public domain debate of the Christian faith by Christians in public life.
- I welcome local engagement with communities to attract all ages and especially young families and young people to church in a style that they feel is theirs and in a faith which is God-given. Visit <http://www.stgiles-derby.org.uk> if you want to see a flavour of what my own church gets up to with all ages, all week.
- I welcome the Church's involvement in education - in Church and non-church schools.
- I believe "double listening" is vital when it comes to navigating a world that is so in need of Christ, not least in contentious issues such as sexuality and gender: *"We listen to the Word with humble reverence, anxious to understand it, and resolved to believe and obey what we come to understand. We listen to the world with crucial alertness, anxious to understand it too, and resolved not necessarily to believe and obey it, but to sympathise with it and to seek grace to discover how the gospel relates to it."* [John Stott, *The Contemporary Christian* pg 28].

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Ecumenical

- I am a Christian before I am an Anglican and so recognise believers in other Trinitarian denominations.
- I appreciate co-operation where it is possible but where, for example, in planting churches in areas of new housing, ecumenical partners are either unwilling or unable to join with us we should pioneer the opportunities with a church open to all.

Interfaith relations

- I favour a situation where each faith is true to its own creed, collaborating where we agree, debating in mutual respect and liberty where we don't. I believe all faith communities should have their ideas subjected to public scrutiny in rational, evidence-based debate.

Anglican Communion

- I greatly value the fact that we belong to an international church. Many of its members in the developing world, although materially poorer than us and in some cases on the receiving end of injustice and persecution, are an example to us in living the Christian life. We should especially support them in campaigning for fairer trade, economic development, democracy and freedom from persecution.
- The Anglican Communion is sadly fragmented as a result of the current crisis over homosexuality. To avoid going down the same path as The Episcopal Church in the US, the C of E needs to continue to adhere to the view of the vast majority of Anglican Provinces expressed in the Lambeth 1.10 resolution.

Personal & biographical details

56 years old and married to Sarah with two children aged 16 & 20.

I've been a Christian for 40+ years for better and worse and God has faithfully sustained me by His grace and is gradually changing me. Through our youngest son who has additional needs, I'm constantly reminded of how fearfully and wonderfully made we are, have a deeper appreciation of the preciousness of all human life and I'm learning all the time about inclusion.

Education & theological training:

BA (Hons) in Business Studies from Ealing College of Higher Education
Advanced Diploma in Theological & Pastoral Studies from Oakhill MTC/North Thames Ministerial Training Course

Pre-ordination employment:

IBM UK - Systems Engineer & Project Manager 1986-95

Previous ministry appointments:

Curate: St Mary's Basingstoke, Winchester 1998-2001
Lay Associate Minister: St Mary's Basingstoke, Winchester 1995-1998

Other posts & responsibilities held:

General Synod member 2010-15
Diocesan Synod Member 2003-19 & Deanery Synod Member 2001-19
Member of Deanery Standing Committee and Deanery Mission and Pastoral Committee 2005-10
Member of Diocesan Mission and Pastoral Committee 2005-10
Member of Vacancy in See Committee 2010-19
Trustee of Crosslinks 2010-19
Training Incumbent 2003-19
Member of steering committee of Derby Bible Week 2002-19
Co-leader of Urban Saints holiday for young people, Madness and Mayhem 1998-2015

Contact:

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Thank you for taking the time to read this address. Please do get in touch if you'd like clarification on anything or to talk. I would be grateful for your prayers and support and especially your first preference vote!

I would endeavour to serve you diligently.