

John Payne – Election Address, House of Laity, General Synod

I was born in London to a non-church-going family. Although confirmed at 15 (through my school's expectation that this had to happen as a matter of course!) I only became convinced of the truths of Christianity in my early 30's, through reading books by the theologian Hans Kueng and attending a very welcoming church in Maidenhead. These brought me to faith. For the last 30-odd years my home-base has been the small village of Edale, in the High Peak.



I worked as a secondary teacher focusing on English Literature for a few years before joining the British Council, for whom I worked for nearly 40 years, my time divided about equally between the UK and overseas. My focus was on international development work in education and governance, and I managed many projects across South Asia, the Middle East and Sub-Saharan Africa for the British Council. I was also responsible at times for more general cultural relations work (including touring with a UK rock group in Egypt in my late 30's!) and managing country offices. I lived for several years in Pakistan, Ghana, Egypt, Sri Lanka, India and Bangladesh, and visited many more countries for short visits. I was lucky to be able to experience and be part of different worshipping communities in the countries I lived in, ranging from exuberant High Church worship in Ghana to the Church of Scotland outpost in Sri Lanka, to the Cathedral in Delhi. A particular joy (and responsibility) was worshipping among Pakistani Christians, a community under constant threat from extremists, and with armed guards outside during services in Islamabad.

I strongly believe that being a Christian involves not only being a church member but also being an active participant and offering service in wider communities. In our small church in Edale, I have been at various times a **Churchwarden** (about 15 years in all), as well as a **Deanery Synod** representative. In retirement over the past 9 or so years I have been a **Chair of Governors** and **Foundation Governor** of our local church school, now federated with the school next door in Hope. I have also been a trustee of the **Derby Diocesan Board of Education** for the last 4 years. Beyond Derbyshire, I was a trustee of the charity **Green Christian** for 6 years, and managed a project of theirs called '*Joy in Enough*', advocating an end to the false secular 'gospel' of everlasting economic growth in our economy. I undertook a 3-month human rights role in the West Bank of occupied Palestine in 2019, under the World Council of Churches' **Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel**, which places importance on listening to Israeli perspectives as well as Palestinians. For 18 months I worked in an **MP's office as a volunteer**, helping to draft replies to constituents' emails and letters. I am also an active member of the **Green Party**, and currently am the Membership and Nominations Officer for its High Peak branch. I am a **Welcomer at Sheffield Cathedral** for 2 hours on a Monday morning, and am Treasurer of a small NGO – **Sustainable Edale**, which among other things runs a community orchard in Edale. I convene a **small 'philosophy' club** in one of our local pubs once a month, which is a good place to explain different aspects of my faith. In addition, I love classical music and opera and go to a number of live performances each year - I particularly enjoy the operas of Wagner, and am Chair of the Manchester Wagner Society. I enjoy drinking my own home-made wine (elderflower a speciality) and have enjoyed walking in the hills in the past, though my increasingly stiff legs make this more of a challenge nowadays.... I am blessed with three children and two grandchildren and enjoy seeing them as often as I can

Why should you vote for me? I would love to contribute to, and hopefully influence, decisions on how our Church is managed and led to make it relevant – politically, socially theologically - in today's challenging society. I believe I would bring to the House of Laity experience of, insight into, and the ability to speak about, the following areas of the Church of England's mission – some of these are particularly relevant to the many small churches of Derbyshire:

- Church schools, and their Foundation Governors, as an essential part of the Church's mission
- The importance of the Parish within Church of England structures, and the importance and needs of small rural Churches
- The Church's prophetic role in relation to the climate and biodiversity crises

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- Being inclusive as a Church
- The global church and ecumenicism
- The Church's advocacy role in relation to International Development

I expand on some of these bullet points below:

1. Church Schools are a wonderful way of presenting our faith to current and future generations, and in particular to young children who might otherwise be unaware of Christian beliefs, life and values. I believe we need to do everything we can as a Church to ensure church schools' status is protected, their role cherished and, where possible, their number expanded.
2. Parishes are the fundamental grass-roots building blocks of Church of England life, where not only do believers gather to worship, grow in faith, and serve one another in love, but where our faith is also given living external form in the eyes of the wider communities within which we live. Our Church is there to give support and sustenance when needed to that wider community. I therefore believe that in terms of future Church resourcing, planning and investment we should have a bottom-up approach, starting with the grassroots and the parish rather than a more centralised stance.
3. Rural/village churches are often at the heart of their communities in a way which it's not always possible for urban churches to be. I wholeheartedly believe that relationship needs to be protected and built upon as a central Mission challenge for the Church. I will argue for that strongly in debate.
4. At the heart of our faith within the New Testament and Jesus' teaching is the claim that storing up treasures and accumulating and expanding our 'riches' ad infinitum is what damages human community, and indeed the whole of God's creation. The drive for perpetual economic growth is at the heart of both the climate and biodiversity crises we currently face. I passionately believe the Church demonstrates God's wisdom principally by renouncing and denouncing this, as well as by tackling the symptoms, e.g. by moving to net-zero where possible, recycling, re-using and re-wilding, among others
5. At a time when our UK international development has been radically cut back, I think the Church should be adding its voice to calls to spend more in this area – responding to the need to be global neighbours and to tackle injustice.

As his nominators for election to General Synod, John Payne has our full support. Having read his manifesto, we know it reflects his outstanding qualifications to represent Derby Diocese Peak Deanery on General Synod. We are certain his wide international experience over many years and great commitment to the issues he outlines will bring a significant voice to the debates and work of Synod. All is driven by his Christian conviction, faith and hope for Christ's church and world.

Bernard and Elisabeth Madden
Nominators from the Diocese of Derby Peak Deanery Synod.