

GS Election Statement. Jo Honour. Vicar. Benefice of Crich and South Wingfield.



After nearly 30 years as a Prison Chaplain, I am now vicar in a rural Benefice and finding parish ministry rewarding and fulfilling. If pressed to label myself in the context of the Church, I would call myself an evangelical charismatic, valuing highly the work of the Spirit and the centrality of scripture to all we do. I have benefitted from many other expressions of the Christian faith, and I love a diversity of ways of worshipping our Lord Jesus. I am a member of the Order of the Mustard Seed which is part of the 24-7 Prayer Movement. I take my annual retreats at St Beuno's spirituality centre.

I have been a Christian all my life and was baptised by full immersion in a Free Church Chapel at the age of 13. The youth group at the chapel was vibrant and once confident in my faith, I became actively committed to evangelism and nurture among my peers. I have never lost the desire to communicate the Gospel whenever possible and by whatever means appropriate. Once in Oxford, doing a Teacher Training Degree at Westminster College, I started attending an Anglican Church. I felt a call to church leadership but taught for 3 years in a secondary school in Wiltshire. During that time, I met and got married to Derek, a new Christian who was sensing a calling to ordained ministry. What followed were the usual selection processes for both of us. We trained for 3 years at St John's College Nottingham and took up curacies in the High Wycombe Team in Oxford Diocese. We served a second curacy in Wincobank and Brightside in Sheffield and during that time I became one of the first women to be ordained priest in 1994.

As Derek and I were not keen to serve in separate churches and were unable to start a family, I pursued work as a prison chaplain. I started in HMP Wandsworth in 1995 and worked as a Managing Chaplain for 25 years. I served in High Security, Female and Sex-Offender prisons as the manager and then dropped my hours for a final 4 years as the Anglian Chaplain at HMP Sudbury. Throughout this time, I supported Derek in his parish

ministry and often ran groups, helped with music ministry and all-age worship. Before leaving the HMPPS in 2024 to move to Crich and South Wingfield, I was able to minister with PTO every week at St Barnabas', Derby, as prison worship took place on a Sunday evening,

I have been quite surprised to find myself interested in becoming a member of General Synod! As a Chaplain, the day-to-day working of the Church of England was not a priority. Now, however, as priest to 2 village communities with grade 1 and 2 listed buildings I find myself wanting to influence the governance of the Church that I love. One of the parish churches is thriving, the other struggles to grow for very legitimate reasons; both buildings are emotionally and historically important to the places that they serve.

I am frustrated by the lack of a national strategy for our rural churches. I would like to see the Church of England make life much easier for the development of buildings that, whilst rightly loved by historians, should primarily serve the needs of *living* people in the community. I was really impressed with historian, David Lee's article about pews in the Church Times on 1 May this year. It can easily be found on-line if you are interested. If elected to GS, I will make it my business to get involved in any sub-committees that deal with matters that concern our rural population. If I am reading statistics correctly, at least 1 in 5 people live outside urban settlements in England and Wales.

On a personal note, there are 3 matters which have had influenced my understanding and theological response to matters of the human heart. I hope these experiences mean I can be representative of those beyond my parochial setting. These are:

1. Having a younger brother (now aged 62) with severe learning disability.
2. Infertility. This led to our adoption of a brother and sister, aged 3 and 5 which in turn has meant significant challenges.
3. 11 years working exclusively with people convicted of a sexual offence. This gave me insight into the resettlement of such people within the Church of England, and I completed a MA degree in 2019 entitled 'God's forgiven me, why can't the church?' (copies available on request!)

Please feel free to get in touch with me about any matters that this statement raises for you. I can be contacted via jo.honour@crichstmarys.org