

Gilli Howarth

Standing for The House of Laity of General Synod

gilli.howarth@hotmail.co.uk

Proposer: Martin Gibbs - Eastbourne Deanery

Seconded: Sara Stonor - Dallington Deanery



Why Am I Standing?

I believe that through God's grace, the church at its best can truly reflect the Kingdom of God on earth. More than ever, the world needs His Kingdom's saving grace, love and justice. Recently retired, with my faith and church as the centre of my life, I believe that I have the passion, time and work experience to be able to serve the church through General Synod.

Both my life growing up in the Church of England as a vicar's daughter, and my experience as a senior executive during my career, have given me skills pertinent to serving on General Synod. I have learned to navigate large organisations, tackle complex detail, as well as big picture issues and have the interpersonal skills to work well with others. It would be a deep privilege - one that I would approach humbly and prayerfully - to serve God and the Church of England through membership of the General Synod.

Work/Life experience

- I am 65, a mother of 2 grown up children with 2 grandchildren. I love learning foreign languages, going for walks on the South Downs with my dog and gardening.
- I worked in Human Resources in a global Investment Bank for almost 20 years - my last role was **Managing Director, Global Head of Diversity and Inclusion**.
- I completed a 2-year Psychodynamic **Counselling Skills** course with the Westminster Pastoral Foundation and more recently an **Anna Chaplaincy** course.
- I am a **volunteer befriender** with "Linking Lives" - a Christian organisation seeking to reduce loneliness.
- I am a member of **Together for the Church of England**.
- I am **co-chair of the Sabeel Kairos Church of England** group.
- I am currently studying '**Biblical Studies**' at St Augustine's College of Theology.

My Faith and Church

I gave my life to Jesus aged 6 while living in Nigeria where my parents served as missionaries with CMS. I have experienced church at home and abroad, rural and inner-city, from high church with traditional liturgy and worship, through to more free-form evangelical churches with modern worship bands.

My church, St Mary, Hampden Park & St Peter, The Hydneys, is in one of the most deprived areas in England. I am on the PCC, co lead a Bible Study group and have started up a Peace and Justice group across 3 local churches.

I am on my Deanery Synod Steering Committee and brought the Carlisle motion on Kairos Palestine to my Deanery which passed to our Diocesan Synod. An updated version of the original motion was recently carried at General Synod.

Issues Facing the Church

Two of Jesus's parables that speak most to my passions are "The Prodigal Son" and "The Good Samaritan" and inspire my thoughts on the following:

- **Discipleship:** I am excited by mission and bringing people to faith, but an even deeper passion of mine is discipleship. How can the church help people on their lifelong journey with God, especially through life's hurts and hardships? We need to focus as much on nurturing faith as on initial conversion, making prayer and scripture accessible so people can develop a living, personal relationship with Jesus and experience God's love and purpose for their lives.
- **The Local Church:** I believe the local parish church is vital to supporting mission and furthering discipleship and where church is at its most intimate and impactful. My experience of leading and pastoring a local post-Alpha Bible Study group for several years gave me an appreciation of how key the local church is. I am therefore naturally aligned with Save the Parish.
- **Clergy Well Being:** Having several members of clergy in my family, I know the particular strains, stresses and loneliness that can accompany clergy life. The church must not place further stresses upon its clergy and needs to better support clergy and their families when they struggle.
- **Justice in National and International Life:** God laid a deep passion for justice on my heart at an early age and I believe that the church has a vital role in challenging social injustice both nationally and internationally. At a time of increasing division and conflict in the world, the church must proclaim the gospel of justice, peace and reconciliation, amplifying the voice of the marginalised and oppressed.
- **Racial Justice:** In a world which is increasingly socially fragmented and polarised, the gospel is clear that the church's calling is to model loving our neighbour as ourself, whoever that neighbour may be. Yet racism is still a painful reality in our world – and even in the church – today. Anti-racism and unconscious bias are topics which should be integral to the training curriculum for ordinands.
- **Inclusion in the widest sense:** I long for church to be a place where every person, regardless of their gender, ethnicity, ability, social class or sexuality, feels equally welcomed and empowered to serve God. I believe that my experience of Diversity and Inclusion in a multinational organisation helps equip me to understand how we can listen to, and navigate, differing views. The church must reflect the gospel and our commitment to valuing each other equally should be the very thing that distinguishes us from the world.

"I have known Gilli for forty years as a passionate campaigner and faithful follower of Jesus. Her insight, knowledge of diversity and deep engagement in all levels of church organisation will make her a valuable member of General Synod and I hope to work with her in this important role."

Revd. Martin Poole, Vicar St Luke's Prestonville, Brighton, member of General Synod.

Thank you for reading this. I would be extremely grateful if you gave me your first preference or highest possible vote as a result. Please don't hesitate to contact me as I am very happy to respond to any questions you may have (gilli.howarth@hotmail.co.uk).