

Michelle Lashley

General Synod Election Address

House of Laity



Hello my name is Michelle Lashley, and I am hoping to be elected to the next General Synod. I would like to tell you a bit about myself and what excites me about this opportunity.

I live in East Sussex with my husband of 23 years and our two boys aged 16 and 20. We attend Hailsham Parish Church where I am the Early Years Ministry Coordinator and enjoy serving in youth, music ministry and service leading.

I grew up in French Canada and came to a saving faith in Christ as a child at a Baptist Church that I attended until I moved to the UK in 2003. I count it a privilege to have had various experiences and seen examples of how the Christian faith can be practiced and sincerely lived out in different traditions. It has been a real joy for me to be in a local Anglican church that is well supported and led by those in leadership in our diocese. It is my desire to have others experience this as well. This is what leads me to desire potentially being involved with General Synod.

Here are some of the areas that I feel most inspired to engage with:

Children and Families

As the toddler group leader at our church, I get to meet with lots of families and hear about their joys and challenges as they walk through everyday life. I personally know the difference that it makes to have Jesus as my guide through this most important area of my life. Even at a toddler group, we get to introduce people to Jesus, the Bible, and church life - sometimes for the very first time. Since we as a church, are so well supported and led, we can be a constant source of support for those in our community. By providing a resource that is hopeful and helpful, we are helping to make our communities and families stronger. Initiatives that allow us to fill in gaps where people might be having difficulty accessing social help and services should be championed.

Disability and Diversity

I take great comfort in being able to fully place my identity in Christ. Being visually impaired, there are many places and spaces where it is difficult to fully participate and belong. I'm very thankful to belong to a church where I am welcome to fully serve, participate and learn - despite having a disability. Sadly, this kind of acceptance is not found everywhere, but it needs to be actively supported and maintained. I am familiar with having to advocate for myself, and also for my children who are on the autism spectrum. I've been in many meetings where sometimes difficult conversations needed

to happen. By being willing to collaborate and listen, change was able to take place, things that have benefited people beyond myself and my family. I want to be able to play a part in making sure that the church is as welcoming and available to each person - regardless of their ability or background. Such initiatives are close to my heart and have very real implications for many people that I know and care for. It would be my privilege to be able to help make sure that disability and difference do not keep people from knowing and experiencing the joy that is found in Christian unity.

Local church and community engagement

I recently viewed some news documentaries laying out issues faced by certain communities that were causing hardship. They touched upon unemployment, immigration, and lack of aspirations - particularly with education. As these communities were looking for answers, the report contained comments and solutions from community members, business owners, local councillors, and educators. I was intrigued, however, that there wasn't a response from the local church. There may have been some valid reasons for this, but I do hope that one of them was not that the local church did not know how or care to help. I have no doubt that there are many people on General Synod (as there are across the wider church) that are already involved in supporting and crafting initiatives that aim to create unity across communities and desire to see them thrive. These are the people that I would like to come alongside. Those who have experienced the benefits of a healthy, biblically-centred church body and want it to be experienced by others.

Hopes

This past month, a child that attended our church's holiday club gave their life to Christ - and so did one of their parents! I am so excited that our church can now help disciple them and grow in their faith in Christ. This is not something that I take for granted: I'm well aware that quite a bit of support needs to be behind us for this to happen. We need faithful, Bible-believing leaders and policymakers who are helping to guide the wider church in Christlike faith. We need people in their local churches to be involved in these structures - willing to serve and help the church be fruitful and faithful to biblical truth, so it can continue to change hearts and lives.

I pray that I will be able to do so with those of you on General Synod as well.

With blessings,

Michelle Lashley

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