

John Appleby, Newcastle West Deanery, Standing for the House of Laity, General Synod elections, Summer 2015

Proposed by: Simon Harper, Corbridge Deanery and Chair of Diocesan Finance Committee

Seconded by: Adam Saunders, Lay Chair of Tynemouth Deanery

Biography

I am 58, married to Rev Janet Appleby with three adult children and I have lived in the Newcastle area for over thirty years. I grew up in London and have worked at Newcastle University since 1984, where I am Head of the Mechanical Engineering department and where I also teach mathematics. I have been involved in many groups across the University, including Senate and Council, and acting as Branch President of the local lecturers' union and also as a member of the Chaplaincy Local Advisory Group.



I have been a lifelong member of the Church of England, and I have attended several churches in this area, moving as Janet took up different posts in East, West and Tynemouth Deaneries, and we also had a spell in Durham. I have served on PCCs and an Ecumenical Church Council, and two Deanery Synods, and I have been a member of Diocesan Synod and Bishop's Council since 2012, where I am also on the Finance Group.

I sometimes play music for services and have contributed to youth work, summer schemes, etc. I was a Governor of All Saints College in West Denton for the whole twelve-years of its life, and I was a Director of the Coffee Plus project for two years. As a postgraduate student, I helped set up a branch of the Student Christian Movement in Leeds.

From 2004-7 I was the local councillor for the Woolsington ward of Newcastle City, including Newbiggin Hall, a fairly deprived area, and I have also stood as a candidate in local and parliamentary elections. I have been a trustee of several local charities, including the People's Kitchen (founding member) and the Cedarwood Centre. Janet and I sometimes form a band for ceilidhs, and I enjoy reading and the Lake District.

What I hope to contribute to General Synod 2015-2020

These are exciting times for the Church of England, faced with decline and questions of relevance, contentious issues, and economic and environmental challenges. General Synod members will have much to consider and contribute to over the next five years. I think it's important that those who are elected play an active part in these debates, whilst always seeking to understand and respect the views of others. In addition, this Diocese will have a new Bishop to help guide and inspire us.

Archbishop Welby has initiated a programme of Reform and Renewal, making clear to us that to continue as we are is to decline further in numbers and influence, and to fail in our mission. This programme will require dioceses to focus their attention much more on where and how resources are used, but also to support and promote a wide variety of practice that addresses these challenges. It is also a call to serious commitment and to the

need to make sacrifices – both material and of old habits. If Newcastle Diocese engages positively with this programme, we can thrive. If we see it as an imposition, we won't!

One of the most significant decisions of the last five years of General Synod was on Women in the Episcopate. In the discussions of 2012, Janet and I contributed the Appleby Amendment, emphasising respect for differing views. The final decision, in 2014, was very positive, accepted by many more and demonstrating an excellent way of working. The process involved listening to others' points of view and respecting sincere beliefs, exploring and adopting ways of remaining together in 'good disagreement'. It will be good if from now on we can adopt the same patience, understanding and respect when we address other contentious issues.

The issue of homosexuality is likely to feature strongly in discussions over the next five years. Society now accepts much more that sexuality is innate not chosen, but it is still contentious and many see it being at odds with Scripture and tradition. My own views have changed substantially over the years and I now believe that everyone should be free to express their love in a committed relationship according to their nature. However, when we disagree on one issue such as this, that should never blind us to the many ways we agree, so it's vital to find a way forward that respects a variety of views and avoids confrontation and the belittling of others.

Beyond the Church, but involving us all, I believe Climate Change must be addressed more fully, or we'll bequeath a much poorer world to our grandchildren. There are some uncomfortable decisions ahead, and I hope the Church of England can help lead society in seeing values beyond material comfort.

General Synod is only part of the decision-making processes of the Church of England, but an important one. If elected, I would play an active role in trying to help us move forwards courageously, but listening to and respecting others' views, as all have a part to play. I am a confident speaker and debater, with experience of sifting through the endless paperwork of committees! Carol Wostenholme's 'Lay Voices' initiative has been valuable in encouraging many more lay people to get involved, and I would aim to work with that structure to hear what people have to say and to make consultation effective. I hope I would be a useful and representative member of General Synod.

Please feel free to contact me directly with any questions about what I've said or any other matter of interest.

John Appleby, September 2015

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