

## General Synod Election Address 2015 – Janet Appleby

I am 57 years old, married to John, with three adult children. I have lived in Newcastle Diocese since 1985. For many years I attended St Gabriel's, Heaton where I sang in the choir and music group and played the organ and piano. When I have time, as well as playing music I enjoy reading, watching films, hill walking, cycling and swimming. I was ordained in 2003 and served my title at Holy Cross, Fenham. Until recently I was Team Vicar at the Church of the Good Shepherd LEP in Battle Hill, Wallsend and currently attend St James & St Basil in Fenham. I am currently the Diocesan Ecumenical Officer, a post I have held for about three years, and I have been one of your representatives on General Synod since 2010. I am grateful to Andrew Shipton and Alex Faludy for supporting my application.



I have been very grateful for the opportunity to be part of General Synod and have enjoyed contributing to debates. If I were re-elected I would hope to use that experience constructively and effectively on your behalf. I would hope to be able to continue working towards creating a church where everyone is able to fully participate in both membership and leadership, regardless of gender, ethnicity, wealth, sexual orientation or disability.

One reason I have for standing again is that I am anticipating a very serious and prolonged debate on the subject of human sexuality in the next few years. I do not underestimate the pain and difficulty, and risk of schism, but still hope that my open and inclusive approach, which was so helpful in the women Bishops' debate, can again be of some use. My prayer is that we can somehow, with God's gracious help, find a way to 'good disagreement' and even be surprised by joy. The new hope and flourishing that has arisen from the Five Principles (that were central to the agreement) could be a model for how to deal with this potentially even more divisive issue. Indeed the history of Anglicanism is littered with examples of how we have found it possible to maintain unity in diversity. With God nothing is impossible! Indeed I firmly believe, as I have often heard others say, that faith is the opposite of certainty, and that the more we can learn to trust and hope in God despite our uncertainties, the deeper our faith will be. I was privileged to be one of the Diocesan Representatives in the Shared Conversations in June and learnt much from listening carefully to a wide range of experiences and views. If I am elected then I hope to be able to use this experience constructively in the similar conversations which will take place at General Synod next July.

My role as Diocesan Ecumenical Officer has benefited greatly from the national perspective I have gained through being an elected representative from General Synod on the Council for Christian Unity (CCU). Through that body I have also become a member of the Methodist Anglican Panel for Unity in Mission (MAPUM). I would be very happy to continue this valuable work should I be re-elected to it. Jesus prayed for us to be one 'that the world may believe' and I see Mission as inextricable from collaboration with other Christians, something that I hope will be central to the 'Reform and Renewal' programme as it takes shape. For example, chaplaincies are usually ecumenical, and it is good to celebrate all that we can already do together, as initiatives such as Street Pastors and Food Banks have already shown.

I also consider the issue of Climate Change to be increasingly urgent both for future generations and for the poorest nations who are already affected. It is a simple matter of

justice as well as care for the environment. I was encouraged by the supportive tone of the recent General Synod debate and the way the Church Commissioners have raised the priority of environmental issues in their investment decisions. However, much more needs to be done. We are still a long way from embracing the call in the Pope's recent encyclical 'Laudato Si'. For example he refers to Patriarch Bartholomew, saying

"He asks us to replace consumption with sacrifice, greed with generosity, wastefulness with a spirit of sharing, an asceticism which "entails learning to give, and not simply to give up. It is a way of loving, of moving gradually away from what I want to what God's world needs. It is liberation from fear, greed and compulsion"" (para 9 p.8 quoting from *Lecture at the Monastery of Utstein, Norway* (23 June 2003)).

The Pope later returns to this theme in his own words:

"Christian spirituality proposes a growth marked by moderation and the capacity to be happy with little. It is a return to that simplicity which allows us to stop and appreciate the small things, to be grateful for the opportunities which life affords us, to be spiritually detached from what we possess, and not to succumb to sadness for what we lack. This implies avoiding the dynamic of dominion and the mere accumulation of pleasures. Such sobriety, when lived freely and consciously, is liberating. It is not a lesser life or one lived with less intensity. On the contrary, it is a way of living life to the full." (paras 222&223 p.162).

I hope very much that the Church of England will soon learn to rise to this challenge to 'Live more simply that others may simply live'.

Finally, I have very much enjoyed the opportunities I have had to feed back from General Synod to the Diocese and also to those deaneries to which I have been attached. As I am not currently running a parish, I hope to have more time to devote to this and to seek to be more effective in listening to and serving all those whom I would represent, should you decide to re-elect me.

I am very happy to discuss any issues or answer any questions and you can contact me on:

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