

GENERAL SYNOD 2015 ELECTION ADDRESS

JOHN B AYERST
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Aged 69 retired house husband and community support worker
 married to Gabrielle, a self supporting priest and retired trainer/ advice worker
for a Mental Health charity'

Gabrielle and I moved to Berwick upon Tweed in 2008 after 29 years living in Kingston upon Thames,

Recent church and community responsibilities;
Member of St Batholemew and St Boisel Church Tweedmouth since 2009
Churchwarden and Sacriston 2010 to 2015
Member Norham Deanery Synod since 2010 and Lay Chair since 2014
Member of Newcastle Diocesan Synod since 2011
Member of Berwick upon Tweed U3A and vice chairman 2012 to 2015

previous church and community responsibilities;
15 years member of Kingston Deanery Synod and the last 3 years as Assistant Lay Chair
10 years member of Southwark Diocesan Synod
I served as a Trustee of both the British Stammering Association and the Kingston Association of Disabled People including three years as chairman

As well as a stammer I also have a severe form of dyspraxia but these have never stopped me playing a full part in the life of either Diocesan or Deanery Synod and speaking regularly in debates. Although it is only in the last twenty years that I have begun to achieve my potential.

I am standing in this election for two main reasons.
First because I have always maintained that at the very least the candidates for General Synod should be as varied and as truly representative of the broad range of people on the church electoral roles. This is particularly true of people with disabilities who continue to be underrepresented on synods.
Secondly because of my passionate commitment to the Church of England. Ever since I was first elected to my local church council in 1971 I have been concerned by the conflict between traditionalists and liberals and the effect it was having on the unity and integrity of the church so many of us from different traditions love. This is why I have always taken, despite my own strong liberal views, a pragmatic approach to the controversies over liturgy, doctrine, episcopacy, priesthood and same sex relationships.

Whilst on Southwark Diocesan Synod I was a member of Affirming Catholicism, the Open Synod Group and with my wife Gabrielle was a founder member of the Inclusive Church Network. However since moving to Berwick I have reverted to my deeper evangelical roots and would now be happy and proud to describe myself as a prayer book protestant and liberal evangelical.

In 2009 Gabrielle and I joined the Third Order of the Society of St. Francis becoming Franciscan Tertiaries, making our life professions in 2011 and now both hold office in the Borders Area Team.

Franciscans have I believe a special calling to be agents for peace, reconciliation and unity and whatever happens in this election these will be my guiding principles throughout my time on Diocesan and Deanery Synods.

As a liberal evangelical I strongly believe that loving, stable and permanent same sex relationships are not incompatible with scripture. It is adultery and, promiscuity which scripture forbids. However I do have reservations about same sex marriages and those who hold the more conservative traditional views on same relationships must continue to hold the right to express those views within the freedom of expression.

I believe that the episcopate must be open to all otherwise suitably qualified and, experienced people of maturity and integrity irrespective of gender or sexual orientation and that those who hold offices of leadership must accept and embrace the disciplines that go with those offices.

If you like what I have said then please consider giving me your first and second preference votes. I am a liberal and broadly support the inclusive church agenda but am far too independent to tamely follow a party line and will actually listen to the debates before finally making up my mind which way to vote or to abstain.