

General Synod Election Address 2015

The Revd Dr Nicholas Buxton

*Priest in Charge, St John the Baptist, Newcastle
Church and Society Adviser for the Diocese of Newcastle*

Proposed: The Revd Canon Peter Kenney

*Ministry Development Officer
Pastoral Care and Counselling Adviser*

Seconded: The Revd Canon Philip Cunningham

Vicar of St Nicholas, Gosforth



About Me

I was born in Singapore in 1966 and grew up in London. I held a variety of different jobs before taking a degree in Theology and Religious Studies as a mature student, and going on to complete a PhD in Buddhist Philosophy.

I was ordained in 2008 and served a curacy at Ripon Cathedral, taking up my current post at St John's in 2012. Since then I have been very active in promoting the role of the church in the wider life of the city.

As Church and Society Adviser I work closely with the public and voluntary sectors, as well as colleagues in other churches. This has given me a keen awareness of the many social and political issues of the region, and I have consequently been involved in a number of strategic initiatives, including:

- Community Organising: I am playing a leading role in the establishment of Citizens UK in the northeast.
- Newcastle City of Sanctuary: I am a member of the working group, seeking to build a culture of welcome and hospitality for refugees and asylum seekers.
- Working with the voluntary sector: I am a member of the Board of Trustees of Newcastle Council for Voluntary Services.
- Member of the Diocesan Committee for Interfaith and Ethnic Relations and the Diocesan Poverty Task Group.

Other interests include eating out, going to the movies, and travelling.

My Vision for the Church

I want to be part of a church:

- That is faithful to the inheritance of tradition, but which also has the confidence to meet people where they are today, and communicate the Gospel in the language of everyday life.
- That is committed to maintaining a Christian presence in every community, especially for the benefit of its non-members.
- That can provide people with the spiritual nourishment they need in order to grow in the knowledge and love of God, and each other.
- That is not afraid to challenge injustice and speak up for the oppressed.

Why I am standing for Synod

I am standing for election as someone who identifies with the catholic tradition within the Church of England, whilst at the same time being deeply committed to the breadth and diversity that is the distinctive feature of Anglican identity.

I bring the experience of the priest of a lively city centre parish, as well as the perspective of the 'church and society' adviser for the diocese.

Now that the divisive issues that dominated the last Synod have been conclusively settled, with legislation based on the 'Five Guiding Principles' that guarantee the mutual flourishing of all, it is time for the church as a whole to move forward and work together to address the very pressing concerns that presently confront us.

I want to be a part of that.

The Agenda

A number of issues are likely to dominate the agenda for the Church of England in coming years. These include:

The 'Reform and Renewal' Programme

I realise that the church needs to address the challenges posed by the narrative of declining congregations, mounting bills and dwindling resources: like it or not, radical changes are afoot. However, I am troubled by some of the proposals in so far as they imply a significant shift in the fundamental ecclesiology of the church towards a more congregational model. I am also deeply concerned that defining mission as growth in average weekly attendance, rather than, let's say, impact in the community, runs the risk of replacing our call to be part of God's mission of love for the world with an inward-looking focus on institutional survival that is likely to fail in the long run.

Equal Marriage

I recognise that the society in which we live has come to a new understanding of marriage that is at variance with the church's historic teaching. I accept and endorse the church's position on this matter, but I also believe that we must do a lot more to tackle homophobia and become a church that is truly welcoming to all, regardless of sexual orientation.

These and many other issues, such as new liturgical rites, inclusive language, tackling poverty and inequality, Anglican-Methodist unity, and the confidentiality of sacramental confession, are going to be on the Synod agenda in the coming years. I passionately believe it is absolutely vital to ensure that a truly Anglican understanding of mission and ecclesiology continues to inform and shape our common life as the body of Christ in this place.

Please consider voting for me with your first or second preference!

Should you wish to discuss any of the above, feel free to get in touch:

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