

## Election Statement by John Pearson

Hello

I am 61 years of age, married with two adult daughters, a former Chartered Quantity Surveyor also qualified in a number of other fields. I am now semi-retired after a career firstly in professional practice and, for the past 28 years, on the teaching staff at Northumbria University. I am rather ashamed that I am only now standing for a place on General Synod, for I feel strongly that we should be looking to reduce the average age of its members. I wonder if the Church's inability, mostly, to attract and retain significant numbers of younger members may stem in part from so few of us belonging to and, thus, understanding the under 40's generation?



I feel very fortunate that for all of my 43 adult years since first coming to Newcastle I have been an active member of St Thomas Church, in the City Centre. During this time I have served terms of office as Secretary, Treasurer and as Warden. I have seen and been a part of a splendid and ongoing example, I believe, of how a city centre church community can and should seek to identify crucial issues, highlight these and work to address them. Preaching and practicing the fundamental Gospel message should, I feel, be the prime work of any church. On a larger scale it should be the concern of Deanery Synod, Diocesan Synod (which I have just joined) and General Synod respectively.

What does the Christian Gospel tell us? ... not what vestments to wear, not the colour of paint we should use in our vestry, not the level of our Quota nor the precise wording of our Liturgy. Principally it orders us to care for the underdog; those less fortunate than ourselves; those suffering hunger, poverty, homelessness, prejudice, abuse. All these can be found not just on the World Stage but in our own country, and in our own communities, I believe, if only we look. If we take Christ's message seriously, as I am sure he meant us to, we should each be willing to do and give everything we can to enable others to be as happy and as well provided with essentials as most of us are ourselves. Personally I know that often I fail in this, but I am reminded by some of our better sermons that I should always try.

At last we see women bishops come into being (20 years after they might and ought to have, I feel). Issues such as this, "counting angels on pinheads" as I see it, have taken up far too much valuable time of a body which meets only three times a year, for a total of around ten days. General Synod should be at the forefront of publicly challenging the Financial Giants and where necessary the Government of the day, whatever its complexion, strongly supporting movements such as the Jubilee 2000 campaign, and calling to account the leaders of other nations for violations of human rights, and so on ...

In addition to the above, if Christ were teaching us today I believe he would entreat us not just to have care for the less fortunate, crucial as this is, but also for the long-term future of our whole planet. Being privileged to see the live broadcast of "Earthrise" filmed by the crew of Apollo 8, on Christmas Eve 1968, I have never forgotten that image; just how beautiful we look as a planet but how fragile too. I have long held a passionate and I hope appropriately informed concern for the environment and sustainability, nurtured both by my professional experience and also through my ongoing membership of Newcastle Green Party; here I have worked

energetically, including standing as a Candidate in Local Authority elections on 6 or more occasions, and once for the Parliamentary Seat of Newcastle Central. At its meeting this summer, General Synod majored on this issue for one debate, and I applaud this.

Of course, after 40 years I have developed personal views, not always supporting the official line. Currently, for example, I am very concerned by the future pattern suggested by the recently produced document "Reform and Renewal". I fear that it may prove destructive of communities rather than a necessary recipe for their survival - more *reform* than *renewal* perhaps? I shall work hard to get the best interpretation for our Diocese. My own most recent personal concern is with the increasing sexualisation of our children and young people, chiefly through and by the media. I should like to see General Synod take a strong stand against this. On other issues I have yet to fully decide; For example, I am not altogether happy with the idea of Gay Marriage.

Having said the above, in these and other matters I believe very strongly that were you to elect me to General Synod I should, and I shall, vote in accordance with YOUR wishes, whatever the issue in question. Although not technically bound to this, I would consider myself your mandated representative, on all matters discussed and decided at Deanery and Diocesan level, and my voting record, if you elect me, will bear this out.

Finally, to avoid any future doubt or disappointment, I must confess that over the years I have ceased to believe in, and so do not pray personally to, any supernatural God or Gods. As current Chair of Trustees the Sea of Faith Network I subscribe firmly to their view that all religions are human creations. For me, it follows from this that God is also a human creation, He being made in our image rather than we in His. I am sure that most young people and some who are older see life this way, as may some of those faced with the hard day-to day grind of making ends meet - not interested in an obscure "pie in the sky when you die" reward-culture but, hopefully, in creating and living in a fair and equal world here and now. Perhaps some of you, and even some already on General Synod may share my feelings, perhaps not. But, however much I reject certain orthodoxies, I promise that I still hold Christ in the utmost regard as my teacher and my guide.

I strongly believe that there are important things that General Synod should be doing as the governing head and guide of the Established Church in a land where there are food banks, to express Christ's original Gospel message as highlighted above together with other practical cares and concerns of today. I was pleased by the pre-election letter written from the House of Bishops in which they begin (not before time, I feel) to address these. Perhaps some of their reforming zeal will rub off on their Church, which must seem, to many, little more than the comfortable middle class at prayer? I ask you, please, to elect me, in order that I might to help in continuing the vital work of raising awareness of, and acting on what really matters for the future...for everyone.

Thank you

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