



Damian Feeney

Candidate for General Synod

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Proposed by Prebendary Mark McIntyre
Seconded by Canon Pat Hawkins

ABOUT ME

- I have served in this diocese for the last six years and have represented the clergy of the Diocese on General Synod since 2015. As a parish priest in Wolverhampton, I love the daily round of pastoral and evangelistic challenges, rooted in a local community of faith, constantly seeking ways to help the church grow in number, in discipleship, and mutual love.
- At present I am on secondment from my Diocesan Mission role to care for two other parishes in Wolverhampton. Previously I was Vice-Principal and Director of Pastoral Studies at St Stephen's House in Oxford for six years. Before that came fourteen years holding a variety of parish and mission posts in the Dioceses of Ripon and Blackburn, including two eucharistic church plant projects, one of which took place in a local supermarket. Prior to Ordination I was a music teacher.
- I was a member of the working party which produced the report *Mission-shaped Church* (2004) and have published chapters in books on Mission in the Catholic Tradition. For 16 years I have been a member of the *Leading your Church into Growth* team, leading conferences, and training on Church Growth across the country.
- I have been married for thirty-four years to Fiona – a Primary School Headteacher in Wolverhampton. We have three adult children, Rebecca (a Curate-in-Charge of a parish in Lancashire) Patrick (a Civil Servant) and Ellie (a Teacher).

GOVERNANCE AND OVERSIGHT

The governance of General Synod is critical in the life of the Church: I feel strongly that there should be a place for all at the table. In the major debates which dominate the landscape every voice must be listened to with respect. Part of the Synod's role concerns scrutiny and vigilance: we are at a watershed in the decision-making ethos of the Church. It is essential that those who lead the church in positions of seniority should be chosen as those who oversee and pastor the faithful, showing gifts in the proclamation of the gospel and the ability to read the signs of the times. Whilst it is appropriate at this time for the church to make quick decisions and simplify its processes, it is vital that the checks and balances which are inherent in our discernment processes are not cast aside in favour of a centrally generated agenda of managerialism. I share concerns expressed about the importance of the parochial system, which should be strengthened and celebrated in every way possible.

SUPPORT FOR MISSION

I will support measures which encourage the mission of the local church, whether in parishes, deaneries, or networks. Our Diocese contains a rich diversity of social, ethnic and urban/suburban/rural contexts; one 'size' does not fit all. Part of my work includes the exploration of forms of mission and outreach appropriate to different contexts and I would want to support initiatives which flow from the local church. It is the task of the church more centrally to encourage these initiatives, to share good practice and to enable appropriate

resourcing. Evangelism and Pastoral Care are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they are two indispensable sides of the same coin, each showing the eternal love of God for his people. A major priority for the church in the next quinquennium must be the proper care of the victims of abuse and support for those against whom allegations are made, alongside the deeper understanding of the effects of the Covid pandemic on local churches and those who lead them.

THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

After six years serving in full time theological education I am convinced of the importance of the full time residential model of theological education as part of the mixed ecology of training models in the church. There needs to be an adequate expression of the range of theological traditions which the Church of England represents. I also unreservedly support vocations initiatives, particularly among young adults, and believe that part of our task is to assist and encourage those who are not called to ordained ministry to discern the specific nature of their baptismal calling. Theological Education is the birth right of the whole people of God.

BETTER TOGETHER

We are at our best when we stand together. We continue to discern prayerfully great and far-reaching issues. I am thoroughly committed to the Five Guiding Principles and wish to continue to explore the ways in which all can move together in mutual love. I will support measures in Synod which strengthen and extend this ethos. Highly charged issues are a challenge from God to bring out the best of us, and I long to see a growth in cooperation across issues and traditions. I believe I have a strong track record in working across the wide range of church traditions in the fields of evangelism and church growth.

As a Catholic Christian I rejoice in the inheritance of concern for social justice, and long to see a still greater engagement with issues of poverty, homelessness and the living wage. I long for the visible unity of the church, believing it to be God's will; as such, it is never out of reach. Relationships of trust and openness need to be forged if the church is to be true to herself and her founder. I believe in a traditional definition of marriage but rejoice in the conversations taking place under the heading of *Living in Love and Faith*. They are the only way forward if the Church is not to retreat into further dogmatism and hurt. It is vital that we do not disregard the great swathe of faithful Christian disciples who are affected by questions regarding same sex relationships; recent experience has shown us that in God's providence there is always a way forward in living with difference.

CONCLUSION

The importance of the next few years in the life and witness of the Church of England cannot be overemphasized. I believe that debate should be rooted and grounded in love, in fidelity to Holy Scripture and the catholic creeds. At the same time we need to emphasise a culture of encouragement, of a church working together as closely as possible to make Christ known, and to hold a critical mirror to wider society in a rapidly changing world.

Thank you for reading this: Please do contact me if you have any questions, or require any clarifications. I hope very much to secure your first-choice vote, and to have the privilege of serving you once again in General Synod.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Damian Feeney". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial 'D' and a long, sweeping underline.

With my prayers

Damian Feeney