

## General Synod Elections 2021

Debbie Parkes

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Proposed by Penny Allen

Seconded by Nigel Beck



**Family** – Divorced mother of two adult children  
**Career** – Strategic Lead, Homelessness, Birmingham City Council  
**Church**- Licensed lay minister at St John’s Church, Pleck and Bescot, Walsall  
**Deanery** – Member of Shaping for Mission  
**Diocese** – Former member of the Racial Justice Tasking Group

### Why am I standing for General Synod?

The church is facing critical times both financial and theologically. If the church is to mean something to those who attend, alongside those who do not, it is important that the voice of the laity is heard at all levels. As a black Christian woman, who has been a member of the Church of England since I was five, I have personal experience of the joy and the pain of that membership. Personally I am ever hopeful and I believe the church has a wonderful opportunity to be a voice for its communities on issues both secular and ecumenical. I’m committed to ministry within the Church of England, having been recently licensed as a lay Reader and I appreciate the churches breadth. Further, my experience in housing and homelessness gives me an insight to how fragile and challenging life is, especially given the experiences of the last 18 months. I believe our role as Christians is to speak God’s hope into the world, and the voice of the laity is critical in adding depth and variety to that conversation. The synod is underrepresented in some areas, it is critical that all people are represented and are given a voice.

### Church Experience

I am a member of St John’s Church, Pleck and Bescot, Walsall, I’m currently Churchwarden and Reader. I have undertaken many roles within the church, from Deanery Synod Representative, PCC treasurer and secretary, to also being the church gardener for a time! I have been involved in organising community events at church and developing partnership arrangements. St John’s is an urban church, with a high level of deprivation in the parish and I have seen my role as trying to bring services into our building which will meet the needs of the people, in a way that reaches out to those with a Christian faith, another faith or none. St John’s is open and inclusive to all, we have a particular ministry to those with learning disabilities, and those who are first or second-generation in this country.

## How do I see the Church of the future?

- The issues of racial equality are yet to be addressed with significant action within the church, we must not shy away from past failings we need to drive forward a new agenda to protect and serve all God's people.
- Safeguarding, is vital given some people's previous experience of the church. We must remain vigilant, and not lose sight of our ownership of this agenda to protect God's people and planet.
- We need to develop and maintain dialog with other denominations and working together on shared ground especially on issues of fairness and justice.
- As we move through the next phase of the global pandemic we need to work closely with chaplaincies and listen to those who have worked in the midst of pain and despair.
- Churches are often the only communal space left in localities, and many of the government initiatives have been pulled back, in the face of financial cuts, how do we maintain faith communities in what can be environments of neglect.
- As Shaping for mission continues, we must explore whether we want ever-larger super churches, or local churches, or a mixture of both. We are a broad church and that is a joyous thing and should be maintained at all cost.
- Opportunities for lay ministry needs more variety, especially so those with limited time and resources could grow and develop at their pace.
- I believe in an inclusive church. The LGBTQ debate has long dominated the agenda, but we also need to make our places of worship more welcoming to a whole range of people, including those with a disability, the poor, the disenfranchised.