

## General Synod Election Address 2021:

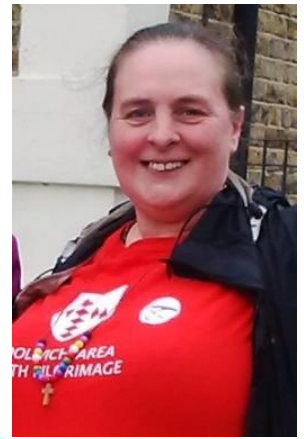
**Mary O'Neill**

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**Proposer:** Mr Michael Aspell, Southwark & Newington Lancelot Andrewes Deanery Synod

**Seconded:** Mrs Olubukola Omisakin, Southwark & Newington Lancelot Andrewes Deanery Synod



I am writing to give you some details about myself in the hope that you will vote for me as a Southwark Lay representative on General Synod.

Please consider voting 1, or your highest possible preference! Thank you!

**Background:** I am a Lay Reader at St Hugh's Bermondsey where I have worshipped since 1978. I was born in Ireland and came to London to escape the troubles of the 70s. Having been raised as a Roman Catholic I found my spiritual home in St Hugh's where the Anglo Catholic style of worship fitted my beliefs. After a period of reflection, and much angst due to the inbred culture of my youth, I decided it was right for me to be received into the Church of England in 2000: I now love being part of the worldwide Anglican family and that is part of the reason I am standing for General Synod now. I want to make a difference in the Church I love.

Throughout my parish life I have taken on a variety of roles within the church including Church Warden, Treasurer, and Children and Youth Leader. Whilst I am dedicated to admin and very good at accounting, I found my true calling in the children and youth work going on to lead summer camps, daytrips and young people services over many years; my main objective being to encourage participation and allow the young people to express their faith in relation to everyday life. I am passionate about children and young people playing a full part in the life of Christ's Church and that would be a key contribution for me at Synod.

Through my involvement with the youth groups, I was invited to join the Woolwich Area Youth Forum (WAYF), progressing to the role of Co-Leader. The WAYF successfully held youth events over a number of years on an annual basis including two separate Pilgrimages to Taize in France. I also went with a Southwark Cathedral Youth Group to Norway to visit their link Diocese in Bergen. Having worked with Churches Together in North Bermondsey, I am committed to Christians of different denominations working together to proclaim the Gospel.

I have recently taken early retirement from full time employment but enjoy working at St Peter's Walworth, where I am PA to Father Andrew Moughtin-Mumby and the Clergy Team, a role I first took on when Father Andrew was Area Dean. I also continue to help with church accounting both at St Hugh's and St Peter's. I love parish mission and ministry in all its forms, and am committed to the many benefits of traditional parish ministry, as well as enjoying working out how we reach people in new, creative ways.

My free time is taken up with walks, trips to the theatre with friends and looking after my adorable one year old granddaughter.

**My thoughts on current issues:**

- Keen advocate of LGBTQ+ rights: I want every single person to know God's love and to feel they have a place and right to belong fully within our Church.
- Feel it is important that the church reflects its parish membership, especially in terms of diversity, gender, ethnicity, wealth/poverty, status and all levels of ability.
- Important to allow young people to explore and experience how faith enriches their lives as opposed to dictating it. To have fun and live life to the full whilst acting within Christian values.
- Have been encouraged by recent initiatives within the vocations field to encourage more younger adults to consider a vocation (Ministry Experience Scheme).
- The mental health of all our people is a growing concern and thoughts must go to how we support those in need of help, both as a Church and by signposting to other services where appropriate.
- Looking to the future of parishes, post-pandemic, I am keen to join the discussion on how to rebuild and restructure in what is known as the new normal.

**What I hope to offer serving on Synod:**

- A balanced and prayerful reflection on the issues presented.
- Commitment to working towards a lasting future for the local and wider church.
- Support for youth enterprises which encourage and empower our younger members.
- Be prepared for the unexpected, a lesson well learned from youth work that stands us all in good stead.
- Work hard and give time to the role.

I really hope you will consider giving me a high preference when voting, as I would love to serve as your representative at General Synod.

If there is one last thing I can offer you, it is that I will do my level best to listen to the local voice and ensure that it is heard at the Church's national forum.

Please do feel free to contact me on the email or mobile number above if you require any further information.

**Please give me your No 1, or your highest possible preference vote if you would like me to serve as one of your Lay representatives on General Synod for the Diocese of Southwark!**