

General Synod Election 2021 – House of Laity

Name: Jacqueline Obodai
Lives: Streatham
Phone: 07908650993 **E-mail:** jackieo12@live.com
Worship: St Augustine's Church, Tooting
Proposed by: Anne McGregor, St Augustine's, Tooting
Seconded by: Jane Milligan, Holy Trinity, Upper Tooting



Dear Elector,

Thank you for taking the time to read my address. I have reflected and prayed on my application to become a member of the General Synod House of Laity. I would consider this position a privilege and a great opportunity to be able to contribute towards the Church of England's decision making and actions in relation to important church agendas and the significant challenges facing our communities and the wider society at large.

I believe that my faith has brought me to this point and that I could make a valuable contribution if elected to the role. I hope that the information I have provided below will help you to conclude that I have the relevant experience, skills and most importantly the values to be a committed and proactive advocate of the General Synod and to represent and drive the changes required. Should you consider this to be the case, please consider me for your first preference vote or the highest preference vote you are able to give. If you have any questions that would assist with your vote, please do contact me.

With blessings, Jacqueline.

Personal life

I am the mother of two young men aged 19 and 17, and I am currently in the throes of preparing for my eldest son to go off to university alongside attending University open days for my youngest, so a significant milestone in our family life. Spirituality is a key feature of my family, and the support and nurturing provided by our church family has had a profound impact on all our lives. With the societal pressures on young men, I believe that the Christian foundation has enabled my children to remain grounded, be compassionate and empathetic, and live by the values instilled in them.

I am passionate about inclusivity and justice and I am an advocate for equality in all areas of my life. I believe that the Church of England should be a strong voice on issues of inequality and speak out for those in society who are marginalised and have no voice. I really enjoy music, keep fit and spending quality time with family and friends. I am a good humoured and committed person who understands the value of hard work.

Church Life

For the past 38 years I have worshipped at St Augustine's Church, Tooting where I was both baptised and confirmed. I introduced my parents to this church, where we have worshipped together for many years. Throughout the years I have actively engaged in the life of the church by undertaking additional roles and responsibilities as part my service to Christ, which has enhanced my spiritual growth. I have been a chorister and was a Sunday School leader until the children left the church. I'm currently a Safeguarding Officer, and I have served on the PCC for 10 years and the Deanery Synod for the past 6 years. Over the years it has been difficult to increase the number of children in the church and has been just as challenging to retain them in their teenage years. As the only church member with children who consistently attended church, I became increasingly conscious of the fact that young people were underrepresented, and that the church needs to offer children and young people more than its tradition. I took a proactive role with running the Sunday School for the small number of children and ensured that each child felt welcome and played a key role, and that activities were relevant and could be easily applied to their daily lives. I also assisted the Vicar on several occasions with school tours of our church. More recently, I raised my concerns with our interim Vicar who has since introduced a monthly family friendly service. I am also excited to have been recently appointed as the church Eco Champion, in this new role I am planning a climate change service with our interim Vicar, and I will be involving the young people to assist with planning and presenting the service. I am also a group facilitator on the Living in Love and Faith course.

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Professional Life

I started my early career as a child protection social worker, and for the past 28 years I have enjoyed a varied career in the probation service. My desire to listen and understand those who I work with both service users and colleagues has been an asset to me in sowing the seeds of change and achieving positive outcomes. In 2013 I received The Butler Trust Award for developing the first service user council in the probation service. As the Head of Training I co-produced the national qualifying training programme, I then became the Head of Performance in the London region. I am currently a senior Civil Servant working on the implementation and delivery of a new accommodation programme to reduce the number of homeless prison leavers, and aid effective rehabilitation into the community. This was introduced as part of the government's Beating Crime Plan.

My firm belief is that my faith and values led me into my profession, and I have been fortunate to find alignment with my belief in justice, equality, humility, and fair treatment for marginalised groups. I consider it a great privilege to be in a position in my career which enables me to address societal issues at a strategic level to effect change and create opportunities for people to lead a crime free lifestyle and I am committed to continually enhancing this.

Some issues facing the Church of England and wider society:

- **Growth** - Engaging and retaining children and young people as active participants in the church, whilst continuing to minister and support aging congregations and those who have been unable to return to worship post Covid.
- **Youth crime and violence** – This is a significant issue facing our communities and one which the church should be speaking out about by advocating for better opportunities and outcomes for children and young people facing school exclusion and poverty, and working in partnership with community groups, the church could be an anchor for many young people, and a place where they find support and an environment to reflect upon how they want to lead their lives. I strongly believe the church should be and can be more proactive in this space.
- **Inclusivity** - Being relevant and representing the diversity of its communities in appointments to clergy and laity and ensuring opportunities are equally accessible to all. All children of God should feel welcome in God's house irrespective of background and it is the church's duty to ensure individuals do not feel excluded.
- **Learning and post Covid recovery** – Covid has taught us that routines and ways of working can evolve and be enhanced. Church online has reached out to significantly larger numbers of people, and with declining Church attendance we need to be creative and exciting in our worship and outreach and consider ways in which we can continue to spread the word and love of God alongside our conventional services.
- **Housing crisis** – Street homelessness is a significant issue in our society. As a church body we should be considering innovative ways to support individuals who are homeless. We also need to explore opportunities to work in partnership with charities and third sector organisations to address societal issues. Covid has highlighted that a huge amount of generosity, kindness and togetherness exists in our communities, we need to think about how the church can engage and galvanise these efforts in order to continue to provide much needed support and resources to those who are vulnerable whilst offering a spiritual sanctuary for them as well.
- **Climate Change** – The climate change crisis is now; the church of England is taking proactive steps to reduce its carbon footprint and promote the green agenda. The church needs to continue to be a strong voice to address the ongoing effects of climate change not just in our inner cities but for the rural communities also, striving as one to achieve these critical goals for our future.

My personal commitment, I will:

- Continue to grow in faith and through prayer seeking spiritual guidance in my actions and decisions
- Be fully committed and fulfil my responsibilities to the best of my ability
- Actively listen to and respect different perspectives, and be constructive in providing alternative views
- Share issues with my local deanery and seek views to inform my decision making
- Make informed decisions based upon the information available
- Respect and embrace diversity and value the experiences of different groups
- Give my full consideration to issues and be an advocate for those who do not have a voice
- Be proactive and utilise my skills and experience to drive change

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