

Election Address for Nicholas Smith of St John's Felbridge and Tandridge Deanery to be elected to the House of Laity

About myself

I was born in Croydon to parents from the north of England but grew up on the south coast. I was christened as a child and attended Sunday school but did not come to a biblical faith until I was 18, when I became a member of a local free church for a few years. The legacy that they left with me was a belief in Bible reading and regular prayer.

After a comprehensive school education I studied German and Russian at Durham University, where I also became part of an Anglican church, attending St Nicholas' Church during the incumbency of George Carey and the curacy of Frank White. After graduation I moved to Bromley where I became a member of the local Anglican church, Christchurch Bromley, for the next 29 years. My wife Jane and I moved to Lingfield in 2014, the year we were married, and shortly after I began attending St John's.

In terms of my working life, after graduation I moved into the IT industry in 1985 and spent roughly twenty years there before deciding to go back to my first love of languages and becoming a freelance translator, which is my current profession and which I still love.

Although I spent much of my free time in adult life making music, it was about 2017 that I felt God calling me to something different, which is when I began exploring lay ministry. The upshot is that I was ordained as a Reader in Southwark Diocese in 2020.

Apart from my Reader duties (which are also privileges!), I have spent a lot of time leading or helping to lead Bible study groups, and since 2017 have also been a member of Tandridge Deanery Synod. I have a particular interest in working with older people and help to run the seniors' group at St John's, Connections, as well as taking pastoral responsibility for the monthly midweek Holy Communion service.

In my free time I am a voracious reader and still enjoy playing the piano and organ. I am also interested in natural history, especially herpetology, and Jane and I have four dogs which also keep us fit with walking.

In addition to the church locally, Jane and I have connections with churches in Berlin and Málaga.

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My beliefs

I am not a member of any particular grouping within the Church of England. Briefly put, I believe in the divine inspiration of Scripture and its overarching authority, and the continuing validity of the 39 Articles of the Church of England. At the same time, being an Anglican, I recognise that within limits there are quite legitimate differences of tradition within the church, both locally and nationally (Article 34). We must be prepared to learn from one another, to take what is good, useful, biblical and glorifying to God, and reject that which is not, however venerable or cutting-edge it may appear to be. It is indeed easy to lose sight of the bigger picture when our own shibboleths are threatened.

My vision for the Church is that it is Christ's body for preaching the gospel to outsiders and strengthening its members in discipleship and maturity, and my commitment is to seeking God's will through prayer and theological reflection to that end.

I like to think that I am diplomatic and open to considering other opinions and views, but equally I have the confidence to express my own view, and as a member of General Synod I hope I would do so "without fear or favour".