

Dr Neil Vass



I am motivated to stand for Synod because I found the Bishops' 2020 letter about civil partnerships difficult to deal with. When I retired from general practice, I took the opportunity to contribute more to the life of the church. To that end, I have been elected to both Deanery and Diocesan Synods from St Mary's Putney.

About me

I have lived in Putney with my wife Isobel for many years and we have three children. After over 30 years in General Practice in Wandsworth and Lambeth I now work part-time in A&E and volunteer at the Science Museum. Since retiring, I have been learning clock and watch repair.

Skills and Life experience

Our two youngest children were born with substantial physical and mental disabilities and continue to need full time care. Importantly, for their and our spiritual formation, they have always been made fully welcome as a part of our church. This has always been a great comfort to them and us. Due to covid restrictions, they have missed the physical contact of others in the church.

One of the many skills I took from general practice has been to listen carefully and to understand another's point of view. Listening well, without being judgemental, is key to the resolution of the many critical issues the Church of England faces. I believe I can bring that skill to General Synod. Inner city general practice brought the world and its diverse people to my door. This experience has been enlightening and enriching.

I served for 10 years on the Great Ormond Street Ethics committee, addressing complex ethical decisions in a multi-faith world. With 30 years representing my GP colleagues nationally and locally, the workload and substantial paperwork for Synod will be familiar.

My Christian faith has brought me great comfort, provided me with a moral compass in my vocation and enhanced my world. It has been encouraging to see the ways in which our church has been able to live that faith by serving the wider community in a range of practical and spiritual ways during the pandemic.

There are a number of significant and important issues that will arise during the next synod.

Safeguarding.

Thankfully we are now a Church where safeguarding is reasonably and clearly embedded at many levels of our structure. After much procrastination, a redress scheme for past victims is emerging. It is expensive, and sometimes inconvenient, but I suggest this is a necessary and proportionate response to our past failings.

Diversity throughout the Church.

As it happens, Inclusive Church was founded at Putney. I continue to support its ambitions to work for inclusion at all levels in the life of the church.

Living in Love and Faith.

The LLF process will clearly require the sort of open and careful listening skills I mentioned above, as it comes before this next synod. It is important to recognise that the subjects may be difficult for some and obvious for others. I believe that the 'Radical Inclusion' for which the Archbishops called requires us, as a church, to include and value all people equally in all relationships. I believe this is crucial to the mission of the Church in the future. I feel that the acceptance of compromise, as found in the Anglican - Methodist Covenant, may be a good way forward.

Climate Crisis.

There is little doubt that the climate crisis is the issue of our times. The Church and its members need to be fully committed to addressing the causes of climate change. I agree the revised target of 2030, as proposed by Synod, is ambitious but I believe it is vital. We need deeds, not merely words, in this endeavour.

Thank you for reading my statement. I would be proud and privileged to represent the Diocese of Southwark.

Neil Vass.
