

John Whittaker

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Proposed by:
Revd Robert Stanier
Vicar of St Andrew and St Mark,
Surbiton
Area Dean of Kingston

Seconded by:
Revd Dr Melanie Harrington
Vicar for the Kew Parishes of St Luke
and The Barn

A little about me

- Born and brought up in Zambia
- Worked as a Chartered Accountant
- Married to Helena with two adult children
- BA in Economics and BTh in Theology
- Love cycling, cooking and wine tasting
- Passion for God's mission

The Church exists by mission, just as a fire exists by burning. Where there is no mission there is no Church; and where there is neither Church nor mission, there is no faith.

Emil Brunner

Ministerial Experience

2000-2018: Leicester Diocese – rural and semi urban

- Served on Bishop's Council, Board of Finance and chaired the Parsonage Board
- Leader of IME 6 and tutor on diocesan ministry foundations course
- Founding trustee of a new Emmaus Community and social enterprise business for homeless people; treasurer for UK Emmaus

2018 – Present: Southwark Diocese

- Team Rector for the Parish of Putney
- Co-leader of Clergy Leadership Programme for the Diocese of Matabeleland.
- Assistant Area Dean for Wandsworth
- 2021 Acting Archdeacon covering John Kiddle's Sabbatical

Dear Electors

As a relative newcomer to Southwark it is with a little trepidation that I put my name before you.

I do so because I believe that some critical issues for the life of our church will come before synod and I believe that I have some of the insights, skills and experiences that will allow me to make a meaningful and life giving contribution to the debates.

I am rooted in a love of parish ministry with steadfast commitment to our diocese and wider church, where together we look for and participate in the mission of God.

Synod

Over the next five years, synod will need to address many challenging issues in the four main areas of business: legislation, liturgy, finance and contributing to matters of public or religious concern.

From the growing disparity between rich and poor, to the hugely challenging and yet utterly essential net carbon zero targets to our clarity of vision for the purpose of Church schools we need imagination, creativity, good theology, vision and courage. I hope to offer that in my standing.

Inclusive Church

I believe that God's kingdom calls for inclusion and so subscribe to the Inclusive Church Statement:

'I am committed to equality for everyone, at all levels and roles within the church, regardless of gender, disability, ethnicity, socio-economic status, mental health or sexuality.'

Living in Love and Faith

Whilst I rejoice in so much about our common life as a church, I despair at our repeating inability to explore and talk on questions of human sexuality in a mature and honouring way. I am very pleased about the LLF discussions going on in dioceses and would love to support any possible changes towards equal marriage, whilst remaining firmly committed to listening to, learning from and respecting those who hold views from which I differ.

The churches theology of sexual relationships is a key issue for me as they have the capacity to bring intimacy, love, joy and delight and also can open us up to the possibility of damaging mismatches of expectations, exploitation and powerful feelings of rejection or betrayal. God desires us to inhabit life in all it's fullness and so we must have a good, theologically underpinned sexual ethic that speaks to a world of independent women,

effective birth control and a wide diversity of experience of gender and sexual attraction.

We need to proclaim afresh the values of fidelity, covenanted love and permanence into the myriad of relationships that make up the fabric of our society. The missional, theological and pastoral well being of our church will be impacted by how this synod approaches and resolves questions of sexual ethics and human sexuality.

Strategic Direction

Over the last eight years I have learned much about SDF funding, resource churches, pioneer ministry, fresh expressions and criteria to determine evaluating churches sustainability and how we support each other.

In all of this, there are expectation gaps, different understandings of vocabulary, bias and anxiety driven agendas as well as creative, imaginative and courageous thinking on how best to take our part in God's mission in our country and world.

It would be easy to polarise debate in the area of finance and resourcing as 'save our parishes' vs '10,000 new lay led churches.' I think it is important to reframe this debate towards questions of what might 'both and' look like rather than concentrate on 'either or.'

My accountancy background, good strategic insights and incarnational theology position me to contribute well to the ongoing debate in this vital area of resources and finance.

Conclusion

I believe I can represent the clergy of our diocese well in General Synod. Please consider giving me a first or high preference vote in this election. If you would like to discuss anything, please don't hesitate to contact me.

John