



REVD YVONNE CLARKE

GENERAL SYNOD ADDRESS

IMAGO DEI

In the Image of God (Genesis 1.26,27)

General Introduction

I am Yvonne Clarke, Vicar of All Saints Church Shirley and happy to be celebrating 30 years as one of the first women to be ordained Priest and the first Black woman Deacon. I am a member of WATCH National Committee, a doctoral student. I often think outside the box and have been a pioneer in my ministry in the Church of England (CofE) and beyond. I hope to enable the flourishing of women in the Church, we have come a long way, but we have a way to go and there is always room for improvement. I will endeavour to help make / implement strategies that will move the CofE into the next century.

I asked for your first preference vote in order to be elected to the General Synod to help effect change in the Church of England and society in its values, mission, faith. And to be a Church where God is at centre stage, to empower the voiceless, listen to the voiceless and those who are in pain. We are all affected by what is being done in the Church from the tackling of abuse, discrimination and injustice, seeking to be a safe Church, a loving Church, an acceptable Church where regardless of race, colour, gender we are accepted, loved as we are made in the image of God and are interdependent on one another.



I use the Imago Dei at the beginning as we are created in God's image and we are to look after one another, God's creation, maintain and cultivate the values, mission of God's people everywhere. The picture below shows the circular effect in the lake making ripples. When the stone is dropped in the lake it creates ripples that spread out from the middle and widens the circular ripples. For me each ripple is representative of a person to wish/ use for what is to be for themselves in a non-threatening situation, a place of welcome, the challenges in life.

Imagination of the ripples effect is not focused on one particular topic as I believe there are many issues that the Church is dealing with. But it is the impact our words action has in the CofE that sends the message to others if we are welcoming, non-welcome or are distant, not understanding.

For me the ripples are about the trinity of equality, empowerment and sustainability of (self-)support. I speak from my own lived experience as a priest, black woman and leader in the Church of England who desires to see a Church where all are treated equally and recognised

for their worth. The Church should be the place where congregants can go to find solace rather than rejection, fear of pain. The CofE cannot afford to be static in response to the exigencies of simply coping. The hope for the future of the Church lies in the self-emancipation of the people UK Minority Ethnic (UKME), Global Majority Heritage (GMH). For the people to be their authentic self and provide new lens to view the current theological literature, issues, Reports for example the archbishops report *From Lament to Action*.

I would help the CofE to look within itself on the characterisation of its congregants particularly UKME, the perception of the CofE by its congregants, young, elderly as questions are asked is the CofE racist, discriminatory and net negative to society?

What impacts society can have an impact in an individual Christian life in the Church, so it is important for people to feel and be accepted in the Church. The sense of belonging is a vital role in an individual's life in the Church. To ask theological questions of "otherness", not to always speak the language of social responsibility. I will strive to empower as a General Synod member the different cultures, shine a light on the awareness for positivity and inclusion.

Empowerment gives independence to people so that they can take charge instead of following blindly. Equality here means non-preference. We need to care for all parts of ourselves, to love ourselves, the neighbour with Christ's love. We have to care for all parts of society as otherwise greed grows in the space of compassion. To be a Church that conjoins-sustains. A safe place, a sacred place where confidentiality thrives, where trust is not eroded but built on. The ripples will start small and expand out as the stone bounces across the water. All of these equality, empowerment and sustainability has to be sustained by active engagement. Most people who win the lottery do not survive it, because they are not given other tools. Support needs to be sustainable. Just as it's not enough for one stone to make ripples. Someone needs to take that stone out of the water (not let it sink) so the stone can make more ripples. Or for others to contribute their own parts to create a change in the collective.

I aim to create awareness, interest, educate and enlighten leading to desirable actions which will help to inform decision making and policy making. I ask for your first preference vote.

God bless you all.

