

Election address: Joshua Rey

The Church of England is a wonderful body that I love dearly in all its historical, place-based, lively, fractious, varied magnificence. A national institution with a local footprint. A balancing act between freedom and authority, between unity and purity, between universal faith and particular place. At our best we echo the Incarnation. I think God can and will use us for good if we will be who we really are. That's why I want to be on Synod.

My perspective

Raised with no religious belief, baptised in my early thirties, I made a positive choice in favour of the Church of England. As a former outsider I see clearly that what divides is small compared to what we have in common.

For we do all trust that God became one of us about two thousand years ago, around 3,000 miles South East of here; that he died, rose and ascended; and that this changes everything. And I think we are all conscious of a calling in the Church of England to live and share this reality here and now: to pass on what we have received, and to proclaim it afresh for each generation, in the particular places where we live.

We disagree about how that works out in practice, and these disagreements have substance. But they really do not compare to our shared heritage. I know not everyone feels this. Sometimes we can feel like several contending churches shackled together. But I have found time and again in conversation and collaboration that this deep unity is real. It is a reality we can discover together.

In any event, heaven forbid we should ever agree on everything. Any human institution in which all were of one mind would be a sect, not the church of a nation of sixty million.

Listening as a discipline

To disagree well we have to listen well. Not analysing what we are hearing, not planning what to say next, but open and present. There is risk in this kind of listening. We put ourselves to a degree in the power of the person to whom we listen. But for the Church of England as a body this is a habit we need to cultivate. At the level of personal spirituality and pastoral care I have engaged with this quite deeply (eventuating in a book, *A Season of Silence: Deep Listening in a Noisy World*). I want to help that kind of listening flourish at Synod.

The role of Synod

Mission doesn't happen at Synod; it happens in Roehampton and Reigate and Rotherhithe and thousands of other particular places, through the ministries of particular people rooted in particular communities. If those ministries come with a price tag, someone is going to have to pay it, at the cost of doing something else. As a former banker I understand these calculations well. Synod has to take its share of responsibility here. But national programmes

are not, I think, what is needful. Synod's task is to maintain a framework within which that varied and embodied life flourishes.

Specific questions

Knowing how much headspace it takes up, I think it fair to state my views on same-sex relationships: but I should say this is not an issue of vital significance to me, and I hope there is space in Synod for those who are not defined by it.

I would be most unlikely to support any change to Canon B30. But I am willing to exercise the rights afforded me by Canon B5 to devise forms of service that meet the pastoral needs of my parishioners. If this (as it has on one occasion) means presiding over a ceremony which, though consistent with the Canons, some would find objectionable, as a Vicar I am prepared to defend the practice. At the level of Synod, however, all I could undertake to do would be to listen to the debate with an open mind.

As I say, though, this issue is a long way down my own list relative to, for example,

- fostering a justified confidence in the Gospel and a consequent willingness to live, preach, evangelize and serve with courage and joy
- not burning the planet down
- not killing people (both abortion and assisted suicide are high on my agenda)
- full inclusion of people with learning disabilities (this, and my views on abortion, are coloured by the experience of bringing up a son with Down's Syndrome)

Above all I do not see myself going to Synod to advocate a particular position or support a particular party, but to listen. For it is from listening that true harmony, and anything worth contributing to the debate, emerges.

Background

PPE at Oxford; early career as a merchant banker at J.P. Morgan; on baptism left finance for disaster relief with Medair; policy work on unemployment in Whitehall; trained at Cuddesdon; curacy at St Leonard's Streatham; Bishop's Chaplain; now Vicar of Holy Trinity Roehampton, the most economically deprived, and by far the most interesting parish in the borough; Hon Canon of Southwark, Area Dean, Chair of the Bishop's Advisory Group on Liturgy, Associate Tutor at St Augustine's College of Theology. Married, one son.