

Dear Christian brothers and sisters

I write to ask for your first preference, or your high preference vote in this election. Your vote carries weight so I urge you now to reflect with me on the priorities that I believe the General Synod should be engaged with over the next 5 years.

Christian Renewal and Church Growth

Whether our society is described as post-Christian or secular it is clear that the role of the church in influencing people's life-decisions and public culture has gradually diminished. Church attendance is falling by 1.3% every year and younger people are voting with their feet. Now we come to elect a reinvigorated General Synod that faithfully and prayerfully seeks out God's vision for our growth and renewal in mission, fellowship and discipleship.

Rochester Diocese

This diocese faces similar challenges to the rest of England. Church attendance in the 18-25 yr age group would need to increase by 3% every year if our mission and witness to our nation are to become clearer, stronger and more effective. Parishes will struggle to be self-supporting unless new resources are released.

Why I want to get involved

Friends, colleagues and existing members of synod have encouraged me to stand. Through youth camps in my teens I became a Christian going on to lead Christian Union at college and medical school. My local church commitment has included home group and Alpha course leadership, PCC and Worship & Ministry Team. As a family doctor for 30 years I have been privileged to share the challenges, the joys and the sorrows of life's journey with many people, both those with faith and those without. I have particular interests in mental health care, GP training and have had various roles in clinical and professional governance. I believe that the insights I have gained would be a valuable contribution to synod as we debate some of the pressing moral issues of our time.

Sharing the Good News

We live in a critical time for the church and Jesus' command to make disciples of all nations has never been more urgent. As we obey Christ's command we will, hopefully, proclaim the gospel both through our demonstration of God's love in action and the truth we speak. The risen Christ was revealed to his first disciples as he walked and talked with them on the Emmaus Road and as His witnesses today we need to be prepared for walking with, listening to and talking with those around us.

New Strategies for Ministry

A reappraisal of the shapes of ministries is urgently needed to enable parishes to adopt more viable models of Christian leadership and service. A wider range of lay resources to include worship and youth leaders, house groups and prayer teams will more truly reflect the Gospel and help alleviate our

unsustainable reliance on the ordained and accredited lay ministries.

Caring for the Vulnerable

Christ calls us to look out for those in need, the marginalized and the oppressed. Churches have led with initiatives such as food banks, winter shelters and credit unions and we should continue to look for imaginative ways of aiding those facing poverty. Aspects of the Assisted Dying Bill placed vulnerable people at risk. Having agreed with Archbishop Justin Welby that the bill would have resulted in a monumental shift in the role of doctors, I am relieved that MPs voted against it. The hospice movement, which started through the vision and dedication of a few Christian doctors and nurses who accepted that life is a gift from God, has promoted holistic palliative and end of life care with generous support for carers. We should be vigilant in recognizing and opposing any future proposals that seek to undervalue human life or shortcut our responsibility to be a caring society.

Our church should also lead in calling our nation to respond to the needs of migrants and refugees. We should be open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit as to how we can be effective channels of Christ's love in their situation.

Keeping Doors Open

We have seen step-changes in our society's attitudes towards and acceptance of a diversity of lifestyle choices, sexual and gender preferences and issues about human conception and genetic manipulation. I would warmly welcome the opportunity of participating in discussions about such things. In my professional life I have often held the hand of those who are contending with the personal misery and external alienation such issues bring up. I believe that, as a church, we should be listening to God, through his word and the Holy Spirit, and to each other as we seek to gain understanding and respect for differing views.

I endorse the church's stance on Christian marriage, that it is, uniquely, the union of a man with a woman, however Christ's call to discipleship is not exclusive.

God's Earth

We are custodians of an abundant planet and accountable to its creator for our stewardship of its resources and our legacy to future generations. Synod should continue to speak out in support of sustainable and environmentally friendly use of natural commodities.

Please Vote

Call me, e-mail me or meet me at the hustings. I will be very happy to discuss my priorities with you.

Mike Lawes



Dr Mike Lawes

St James Church Tunbridge Wells

Tunbridge Wells Deanery Synod

Rochester Diocesan Synod

Member Christian Medical Fellowship

Director Crossways Community [Mental Health Care]

Working as GP at Rusthall Medical Centre

ADDRESS

Ashdown House, 11 Hungershall Park
Tunbridge Wells, Kent TN4 8NE

TEL:

01892 549260
Mob: 07818 048321

E-MAIL

mikerlawes@btinternet.com