

MARINA JONES

CANDIDATE FOR GENERAL SYNOD

Dear Elector

I am standing for General Synod for the first time. As a professional fundraiser in the arts, Trustee, Sunday School teacher, and volunteer I believe I have the skills, strategic understanding and experience, and above all, faith to make an excellent General Synod representative for the Diocese of Rochester.

I believe I would offer a fresh and dynamic voice able to articulate the importance of Christian faith in the twenty-first century.

Please consider voting for me, or giving me a high preference vote.



About me

Like many in my generation I had a secular upbringing and I came to faith in my 20s. So, after doing the Alpha course, invited by a friend (how often is that the story of church growth?) I was baptised at Holy Trinity Brompton by Nicky Gumbel and then was confirmed a few years later at Christ the Saviour, Ealing Broadway having grown and matured in faith. This means I have a real appreciation for the breadth of the Church of England and the importance that each voice brings to the whole. After getting married, my husband and I moved to Sevenoaks where he is the parish priest at St John the Baptist, Sevenoaks.

During the pandemic the church has been increasingly important, and I have taken a more active role. Before the lockdown, I had been leading Sunday school monthly, but with some regular teachers unable to teach or work the technology, the Pastoral Assistant and I have kept Sunday School going – finding new and fun ways to engage the children and welcome new families. I have assisted with live streaming the services and learnt a lot about camera production and live broadcast! The Christmas Eve nativity is always a big local event with our local school and wider community in attendance which we could not do this year. I worked with the vicar (my husband) and church wardens to help set up a nativity trail with videos from the Sunday School acting out the story available on QR codes.

I was for a number of years in my 20s a deanery synod rep in West London, (Hammersmith and Fulham). Small children made carrying this on impractical but it does mean I have an understanding of the synodical process and structures of our Church – and now the children are older I have time to dedicate to Synod.

I work full time as a fundraiser and used that skill and knowledge to help our church foodbank write their first constitution and become an established charity. During the pandemic, whilst working and home schooling the children I was fortunate enough to be a volunteer at the local vaccination centre stewarding and welcoming people for their vaccinations.

Why am I standing?

To serve the living God I believe we must use our time and our talents wisely – in our professional lives and in service to the church.

As a professional working parent, volunteer, former school governor and current trustee I believe I have the skills and experience to make a useful and valuable contribution to General Synod. I am used to reviewing complex papers, budgets and providing a critical and strategic (and supportive) input to help raise funds and improve the workings of the charities I am involved with.

Our church opened as soon as the regulations relaxed and the importance of the parish church as a place of worship, at the centre of the community and a place of prayer has really been highlighted through the pandemic. The parish church system should be cherished and preserved, not at the expense of other initiatives but to work in harmony with them. Investment in our parish system is vitally important for ministry, for sacraments and for our Christian fellowship and I would be a strong advocate for that approach on General Synod.

What do I stand for?

As someone with a secular upbringing I am deeply conscious as to the image the Church so often shows to the outside world. Too often we seem at war with one another, bickering, rather than sharing the good news of the Gospel. With pressures from within and without, now is the time for a General Synod committed to the unity of the Church, to the gospel mission and to protecting the parish system. The financial pressures on the Church are immense and we must fight for less wealthy parishes not to be penalised, but really invested in. We must ensure that mutual flourishing, where all are welcome and listened to allowing collaboration and a focus on mission (not just admin). The Living in Love and Fellowship conversation has just begun. We need to listen to all opinions carefully and show God's love to all. The sacraments belong to the wider church and are not ours to change. In saying that I would urge that pastoral sensitivity and support to be shown to all, regardless of circumstance.

In conclusion

I have the dedication to the unity of the Church of England, church experience and professional skills to be a really valuable member of the Synod. And it would be a huge honour and privilege to be elected as a member of General Synod for the Diocese of Rochester.

Thank you for reading this and if you think I would represent Rochester well as a Synod member please give me your first or high preference vote.

Please remember all General Synod candidates in your prayers. Thank you.

*Yours in Christ
Marina*

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Proposer: David Bonner
St John the Baptist, Sevenoaks

Seconder: Sheelagh Gudgeon
St Augustine of Canterbury, Belvedere