

Candidate: The Reverend Naomi Maxwell: Assistant Curate, St Leonard's Shoreditch.

Proposer: The Venerable Adam Atkinson: Archdeacon of Charing Cross.

Seconder: The Reverend Tracy Browne: Assistant Curate, Christ Church, Isle of Dogs.



A bit about me...

I am a twenty-nine year old woman of Afro-Caribbean heritage, and first felt a calling to ordained ministry at twenty-one. The diocese' championing of young vocations has been essential to me as I've navigated this journey. As the church seeks to be younger and more diverse, it's important that we support and recognise the contributions that young people can make to proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ, especially for a generation that is so passionate about social and environmental justice. I also care deeply about honouring different expressions of worship because I have been formed by so many. I was dedicated in the Salvation Army, before attending a High Anglican church as a child, and then a Charismatic Evangelical church after university. As such, I have a real desire for pursuing genuine unity within diversity, recognising that we are all 'members of the household of God,' and that part of our witness as the church is tied to our commitment to unity and integrity. This passion has directed further study as the topic of my Masters dissertation, and what in time will likely become a PhD.

My Experience...

As a Londoner, I'm proud to be a part of a Diocese with such a multiplicity of languages, ethnicities, and ages, and believe that the Church is at its best when it humbly displays Jesus' wide-reaching welcome and hospitality. When good governance, advocacy and faith overlap, amazing initiatives can be created, such as great projects like the Clewer Initiative or community sponsorship. Prior to getting ordained, I worked in parliament and the charity sector. In parliament, I worked as a researcher for the Archbishop of Canterbury, supporting the work of the Lords Spiritual in areas such as refugee advocacy, housing, and foreign affairs. This experience showed me how church and state work collaboratively for the common good and taught me the importance of good governance in all spaces, including the local church. It was also the first time I observed General Synod as it sought to enable and resource the ministry of the wider church. When I later joined my local PCC, I realised that if I wanted to see contextual issues such as racial justice, food poverty or youth empowerment better resourced, I would need to be active and present within these decision-making spaces. Therefore, I want to contribute to the valuable work that Synod does, and to represent the opinions of clergy and laity from across our diocese. As a representative, I would seek to contribute to discussions on empowering young people in ministry, advocating for those on the margins and amplifying the experiences of Minority Anglicans.

In 2018, I participated in the Conference of European Churches, which gathered to promote witness, justice, and hospitality in contemporary Europe. I was encouraged by the collegiate nature of these discussions. The experience of participating in elections, committees, and corporate worship was enriching, and the exposure to a wide variety of contexts, spiritualities and liturgical expressions highlighted our shared commonalities, and the manifold ways in which difference can be learnt from and respected. London is a city of many nationalities, with Christians from all over the world searching for places of worship. As a representative to Synod, I would endeavour to share these learnings and experiences as the Church seeks to offer welcome and fellowship to Christians from a wide array of cultures.

Jesus' call to love "the least of these" unites each one of us as we say yes to ordained ministry, and so before getting ordained I worked for a domestic abuse charity in East London. This experience demonstrated the importance of strong safeguarding practices, and my role was to advocate and support women and children who are often unseen and live in immediate danger. Working for the charity, which engaged with civic and religious groups, regularly reminded me of the words of James 1:27 'Religion that

is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to care for orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.' By the time I left the role to begin ordination training, it was full of conviction that good governance and advocacy can empower the church to be a more engaging, accessible, and integral place for the communities that we serve. Whilst I may only be twenty-nine, I am confident that these experiences, and the rich context with which I serve in my parish, and the wider Area of Stepney, would be a positive contribution to discussions about resourcing mission and evangelism within the Church of England. Thank you for reading, and please consider giving me a high preference vote. If you have any questions, please email me at naomi@saint.church.