

Election Address — Jake Elsley

I'm 30, and I've been self employed and running technology businesses for the last ten years. I've been a member of St Mary's Bryanston Square for six years, and over the past year I've served on both our PCC and Deanery Synod. I'm standing for General Synod because I want to get more involved in the wider life of the Church and bring a slightly different perspective to it.

I came to faith through youth leadership as a teenager, and that experience has stayed with me. I know what a difference great youth work can make because I experienced it myself. I also think it's an area where the Church is often not putting enough money or attention. I've funded the start-up costs and second year of a youth outreach project on the Isle of Wight, and I continue to support youth and ministry work here in London.

I'm also interested in how we reach people outside the Church. We are living in a world where people's lives are increasingly digital, yet I don't think the Church has really caught up. There are some very good examples of churches doing this well, but I don't see enough of it being pushed at a national level. I think having younger people involved in those conversations matters.

If elected, I won't see Synod as a place to simply turn up and vote the way I'm expected to. I'll read the papers, listen to the arguments and make up my own mind. If I think something is wrong, I'll say so. If I think something is good, I'll support it. I don't think being young means I have less to contribute; if anything, it means I can bring a different perspective to some of the debates we've been having for years.

One issue I particularly want to advocate for is greater inclusion within the Church, including the position of clergy in same-sex marriages. I recognise this is an area where Christians who love God and take the Bible seriously continue to disagree, but my own view is that the Church shouldn't be the arbiter of who is or isn't suitable for ordained ministry on this basis, and I'd like to see that position change over time. This isn't the only reason I'm standing, but it is something I feel strongly about. St Mary's holds a minority position on some of these questions within the diocese, and I'd be proud to represent that view nationally, alongside genuine respect for those who see it differently.

I'm newer to Synod than some candidates, but I bring experience of running a business, managing money and making decisions where resources are limited. More importantly, I try to put my money and time behind the things I say I believe in. After Covid, for example, I set up a free coffee bar at church because I wanted to help rebuild some of the community we'd lost during lockdown.

I'd be very grateful for your vote.

Jake Elsley

St Mary's Bryanston Square