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Proposer: Revd. Louise Cathrow
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Second: Revd. Henry Eatock-Taylor
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Background

I was brought up in an inter-church family (my dad was a curate in Sunbury-on-Thames and my mum is a Roman Catholic), and spent my childhood in a mix of Roman Catholic, Anglo Catholic, Evangelical and more Central churches. I've settled as an evangelical but I have found my experience helpful in building personal links across the divisions that have played out in Synod. I have been in London Diocese since ordination 23 years ago. I served with a café-based church for those commuting to work near Covent Garden, and in training and leading Christianity Explored courses at St. Helen's Bishopsgate for those looking into Christian faith. For ten years I was curate with responsibility for student ministry at St. Helen's, then Associate Rector with responsibility for the long-term church family congregation. I was also involved in Euston Church (a BMO in Camden Deanery) and latterly Priest in Charge of St. Michael's Cornhill, a Prayer Book Society parish with a strong choral tradition. For the last five years I have been Rector at All Souls Langham Place.

Other Diocesan Experience

Diocesan Synod since 2006, and I've been involved in London Open House for City Deanery, in the 2012 Ambassadors project, in Pray For 7 as part of Capital Vision, and on the planning group for the London Shared Conversations on Human Sexuality. I have always been excited by the chance to work together to do things none of us could do alone in our parishes. For me, that's also the reason to be involved in General Synod.

I was an ADDO for Two Cities from 2016-2021. It was a huge privilege helping a wide range of women and men explore their vocation, and has informed some of what I have given time to on General Synod.

General Synod Experience

I was elected in 2015 and have loved getting to know all the people involved from across the country, and the ways in which Synod operates. I have given particular attention to vocations, and to ministry with young people.

Vocations: During the last Synod we have moved from an improving and healthy position on new ordinands to a situation of serious concern. While there do appear to be some green shoots of recovery, particularly in London, we are facing a national shortage of clergy unless barriers to vocations can be addressed. Many of these barriers boil down to a lack of trust in the national church, and a lack of confidence that the basic role of incumbent to a parish will be sufficiently resourced and supported in the future.

There is positive experience from London to share in co-operation across traditions, in resourcing of training, and in the tailored pathways to selection via the Elizabeth and Peter streams.

More funding for clergy in general, and for ordinands in particular has been offered but there is work yet to do to fully secure this. In the next Synod there is likely to be a major review of funding to TElS and the challenge of how to balance distinctive traditions, with comprehensive preparation for a changing Church of England, and falling numbers of ordinands.

Ministry with young people: Despite some progress in transparent publishing and analysis of data that I have been glad to be involved with, and despite some serious funding initiatives at national level, I remain concerned by the decline in attendance of children and young people over the last decades, and at the continued lack of understanding of the national picture. While some Dioceses in the last year are showing growth among young people, there remain far too few children in church for the continued health of our parishes, and they continue to be concentrated in too few places.

I was elected to the committee of the Evangelical Group of the General Synod, and also to the Church of England Evangelical Council as one of the representatives from General Synod.

I have served on several of the working groups connected to LLF/PLF, and also on the House of Bishops Standing Commission on the 5 Guiding Principles, initially covering the complementarian episcopal vacancy in Maidstone/Ebbsfleet. It has been a privilege to seek to build relational bridges across differences of conviction. In reality this has been possible on the 5 Guiding Principles because there is clear, consensus agreement among the Bishops that they need to be made to work, but it has been less easy on LLF.

Aims & hopes for this Synod

Finances: There are significant decisions to be made about how the money of the Church of England will be allocated and stewarded in the future. Parish and Diocesan income is dangerously stretched in many places, while there remain significant capital assets. The Church of England instinct seems always to be to centralisation and to grand but short-term gestures as opposed to long-term, local ministry. I think we need to maintain a prayerful confidence in God for the future, along with a conviction that parishes can grow, people will come to faith, and young people can be drawn into whole-hearted service of God's mission in the world.

I have acted as a Patron's representative in small rural parishes since the mid-90s and have seen the dangers of central over-reach against the rights of PCCs and incumbents. The demographic challenges of the next decade will pose real risks to these local rights.

PLF: Huge energy and time has been spent, at huge personal cost to those on every side of these debates but with little real resolution so far. The House of Bishops intend to bring new proposals in perhaps three years time but without a sense so far of what will be different or what will enable consensus. On Synod I have sought to build bridges with those on every side of the debate who want to avoid the disastrous litigious splits seen in the Episcopal Church in the USA. The only hope for any kind of resolution between those of very different convictions in the church is real honest engagement with how deep some of these disagreements are.

I support the church's current affirmation of the biblical pattern of chastity and marriage; I have been involved with the development of the Alliance; my background is in involvement with CPAS, Renew and Church Society.

Thank you for reading this; I hope it has given you a sense of where I'm coming from. Please be in touch if you'd like to know more.