

Graham Everness

Dear Christian brothers and sisters,

Why am I standing for election to General Synod and asking you to consider giving me your 'first' or other 'high preference' vote please? Because:

- As a member of the Church of England throughout my life, I long to see it flourish in its mission to advance God's kingdom and would therefore commit to engaging constructively in helping it address its significant current challenges;
- My God-given interests and gifts, honed over my working lifetime, enable me to present myself as well-suited to a governance and oversight role such as this;
- Through serving over the years in a rich variety of ways (in my local parish, the Deanery and the Diocese), I have had the opportunity to build up a wide understanding of the Church and its needs; and
- As a Licensed Lay Minister (Reader), I have the privilege of being well-trained to bring a biblical, theological perspective to discussions and decisions.



My story

Having grown up in a family attending a (moderately) 'high' Anglican church, and a couple of years after being confirmed, I made an additional personal commitment to Jesus Christ shortly before going up to University. When I graduated, I took up a job as a trainee actuary in Dorking, where I have lived ever since.

My career enabled me to develop skills not only in analysis, problem-solving and attention to detail, but also in the areas of communication (written and oral) and the management of both people and time. In later years, I sat on various working parties helping Government departments and regulators to draft new legislation and professional guidance with the aim of enhancing workplace pensions for the public benefit. I would very much welcome the opportunity to bring all this experience into the 'governance' role of General Synod.

For my entire 40+ years in Dorking, I have been a member of St Paul's Church, where (at different times...) I have served in the following ways:

- Leader of the 11s-14s group, and a helper in the creche;
- Leader of a midweek homegroup;
- Churchwarden for 5 years (including during a Vacancy);
- PCC Treasurer (3 separate stints!) and PCC Secretary;
- World Church Team leader (supporting overseas mission partners);
- Care home visitor;
- Preacher and service leader (including taking funerals).

One particular blessing early in my time at St Paul's was meeting my wife while we were leading the Pathfinder group together. We now have two grown-up daughters and (so far...) two delightful grandsons.

The 'third age'

I went part-time at the age of 55, allowing me to take up a number of new roles, including becoming increasingly involved in a variety of Deanery and Diocesan matters:

- Training for and being admitted as a Licensed Lay Minister (LLM), and subsequently becoming responsible for co-ordinating the ministry of all LLMs in the Diocese by acting as the 'Registrar of LLMs';
- Taking on the role of Lay Chair of Dorking Deanery Synod;
- Assisting with the management of a Foodbank being newly set-up by the ecumenical group *Churches Together in Dorking*;
- Being elected to Bishop's Council (where I currently serve on sub-committees covering Finance, Risk Management, Safeguarding and Remuneration);
- Recently, becoming Vice-Chair of the Guildford Diocesan Board of Finance; and
- Continuing my involvement in the world of pensions (after I had formally retired from actuarial work) by becoming a member-nominated trustee of four schemes for employees of the insurance company Aviva.

My 'key concerns'

- Servant-hearted leadership: the first sermon I preached as a prospective LLM included Jesus's words "the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve" (Mark 10:45). I would not claim to be naturally humble, but I pledge to keep reminding myself of this principle and (if elected) to represent all the laity in the Diocese.
- Making disciples of all nations (and ages, backgrounds etc. – Matthew 28:19-20): we need to be a mission-minded (and not inward-looking) Church. That doesn't mean that 'good internal workings' are not important (they most certainly are!), but our key objective must be to be a *Transforming Church, Transforming Lives*.
- Best use of resources: this covers not just our finances, buildings and other material resources, but also our 'people'. Every Christian has Spirit-given gifts to be used for God (1 Corinthians 12:7), but much still needs to be done to achieve the cultural change envisaged by the 2017 Synod report *Setting God's People Free*.
- The stakes are high: God *will* build his Church, but as the story of Ephesus warns us (see Revelation 2:4-5) there is no guarantee of that happening on our own 'patch'. I thank God that our two daughters are continuing to grow in their faith after setting up their own homes and families, but it is a warning sign for us that they are both now choosing to do so in independent (i.e. not C of E) churches.

Thank you for reading this letter and treating this election with the seriousness it deserves. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all,

Graham Everness

[Address: 23 Glebe Road, Dorking RH4 3DS, and email: geverness@aol.com;
or if you would prefer to talk over the 'phone, I'd be pleased to send you my number]

Proposer: Howard Mason (Lay Chair of Surrey Heath Deanery)

Seconder: Clare Bevan (Lay Chair of Leatherhead Deanery)

"Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish abundantly far more than all we can ask or imagine, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever. Amen." (Ephesians 3:20)