

ANDREW WOOD – Candidate for election to the General Synod House of Laity

Election Address

My dear colleagues

After much thought and prayerful reflection I have decided to put myself forward for election to the House of Laity. I am grateful to Janet Wilcoxon and Michael Kirk of agreeing to support my nomination. The question before you is whether or not you agree with them that I am a candidate worthy of your support.

My faith journey is, I suspect, a not untypical one. I was brought up in a church going family, where my father was a sidesman and parish treasurer. I regularly attended Sunday School and our parish church but drifted away from my faith in my late teens. Experiences at university restored my faith, to the extent that I put myself forward as a candidate for ordination. The Church gently resisted my enthusiasm and, with what proved to be wisdom, suggested that I experience more of life. The inevitable distractions of working life and family life meant that my church attendance became irregular and less frequent but I retained a firm belief in God and a sustaining faith life away from church. A few years ago I remarried and moved to this beautiful corner of God's creation in South Shropshire. I almost instantly rediscovered a much deeper relationship with God and a renewed sense of vocation, although now it manifested itself as a desire to serve.

That service now takes a variety of forms. I am a member of our PCC here in Mainstone and Lay Co-Chair for the Clun Forest Deanery. I also serve as a co-opted member of the Diocesan Finance Committee; and work with a number of clergy colleagues as they go through the process of Ministry Development Review.

My background and work experience provide me with a set of gifts and skills which I can apply to these various roles. I have led large staff teams (up to 1300 people) and managed big budgets (up to £2.5 billion). I have wide experience of working with political and other leaders. I have managed legislation through Parliament. I am practised at scrutinising both corporate and individual performance. I am a qualified coach.

I am standing for election to General Synod because I believe that the rural church needs a persuasive and critical voice in national debates about the future of our Church. If elected, I will approach the role in a spirit of service. I would characterise myself as "cautiously progressive". I do not believe in change for changes sake but I do believe that we should grasp the challenge of living and believing in the 21st century. I will be questioning and constructively challenging. I will support initiatives that promote and encourage growth. But I will always remember that there are many faithful worshipping communities that need to be cared for, even where growth and change is a challenge beyond them.

If elected I will seek to consult you about issues as they arise, either through our own Diocesan Synod or more directly but informally. I will inform my own views by seeking to understand yours. But I will serve you best by acting as your representative rather than as your delegate and by applying my own ability and experience to the issue before Synod, trusting in God to steer me right. I can do no more.

Thank you for reading this.

Andrew

