

## **Rev'd Canon Priscilla Audrey White**

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**Proposed by: Rev'd Graeme Richardson: Vicar of St. Peters Harborne**

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At the heart of my faith and the reason I am standing for General Synod is the picture of Jesus found in the gospels, arms open wide, welcoming people from all walks of life, all stages and conditions and offering them hope, shelter, challenge and life. Jesus' mission touched so many and offered so much grace. Moreover this Jesus is part of God-in-community, God existing with Godself in a never-ending dance of love in which we are invited to participate. Synod has an opportunity to shape the policy and the practice of the church and to model what church is about as it does so. So what sort of a community of faith might be implied by that core belief?

I believe that we need to give permission to each member of our church (and by extension to those outside) to become the people that God is calling them to be. In our missional endeavour we invite people to join in God's dance and we want them to be free to hear and respond to God's call. This involves a massive commitment, not only from them but also from the church that seeks to develop those callings. The aspiration for a 50% increase in vocations to ordained and professional lay ministry is huge. If God is in this then we will have serious work to do in the church both nationally and on diocesan level to resource this effort, both financially and with the human resources to enable this in terms of training and support. We need to be creative in finding ways to finance the aspirations at the heart of our Mission.

I believe that the church needs to be a place where we give one another permission to have different views. Classically, the Anglican church has been a broad church, encompassing different views on ritual, theology, the practice of ministry, and of course now with the ordination of women, on orders as well. This broad church is creaking at the seams and the issues preoccupying us around sexuality are likely to be more divisive than those relating to women in the episcopate. We need to learn what "good disagreement" really means. I have had an experience of this having been privileged to be part of a small group, three female priests and three male priests who were members of Forward in Faith. We met together for about two and a half years, listening to one another's stories, praying and eating together. The vital thing about that group was that we wanted to understand one another. We weren't going to change one another's minds or solve the issues

but the process of meeting first as human beings seeking to follow God's call on our lives was key to our work together and transformative. In that group we discovered a real sense of fellowship that transcended the issue which so sorely divided us. I would hope that we can reach a place in the church where both those who are hoping for a change in the church's policies and practice around issues of homosexuality (among whom I would count myself) and those who are deeply uncomfortable with that possibility can recognise the truth of the other and be enabled to live out their calling together, not driven apart by schism.

I believe we need to give ourselves permission to speak out in the public square and on the street corners, wisdom calling to her children, the prophets calling the people (or the government) to account. We have seen much of that in recent weeks with people of all faiths and none responding to the refugee crisis in Europe. It is the calling of the church to be in the forefront of issues of justice and world importance. Synod deals with many of these types of issues and the quality of debate and engagement needs to be high if we are to be listened to with anything other than a bemused tolerance.

And with all this we need to commit ourselves over and over again to mission, to approaching those around us with arms open wide in welcome offering an sharing the love of Jesus to those who above all else need to know they are valued and loved.

A bit about me...

I have been ordained 26years, deaconed in 1989 and ordained to the priesthood in 1994. I worked for 16 years in Exeter diocese both as Stipendiary and NSM in council estates and a village, alongside roles in University chaplaincy, Archdeaconry Warden of Readers and as a Bishop's Adviser for Women in Ministry. During the last months of my time there I was on General Synod having gained the seat in a by-election. It was a great privilege to be part of the Synod at that time as the early debates on Women in the Episcopate took place and to engage with the synodical processes. I came to Birmingham 10 years ago as Priest in Charge of St. Faith ad St Laurence Harborne and in 2010 was collated as Vicar and as Area Dean of Edgbaston. I am currently Chair of praxismidlands, an organisation that puts on training events for clergy and lay people. I am on Bishop's Council and serve on FIPS (Finance, Investment and Property Services).

I am committed to encouraging people to recognise and develop their gifts in ministry both in doing things within the church that they would not have thought they could do and encouraging church members to become more missionally minded so that all that we do in church is guided by the principle that we are there to welcome those who have not yet responded to God's invitation to join the life-giving dance of faith. I am committed to encouraging liturgical creativity and to developing the gifts of lay people in the leading and planning of worship.

If General Synod is to be an effective pace of action in the church and country today we need to capture hearts and minds for the God of missional love. I would be very privileged to serve as a Proctor in Convocation for Birmingham Diocese and hope that you will be able to give me your first, or at least a high preference vote.