

## Stella Jennings

### Election Address for General Synod

**Proposer:** Mrs Carol Dealey, Edgbaston Deanery and Birmingham Diocesan Synods.

**Secunder:** Mrs Ruth Miller, Edgbaston Deanery Synod.

I am a member of St John the Baptist Church in Harborne where I have been a regular worshipper since 1976. I first visited as a student, then became a lay staff member. I continued worshipping at St John's whilst pursuing a career and family, returning to the lay staff in 2003.



### Church background

- Brought up as a Methodist
- Attended a Baptist church whilst at university;
- Trained for lay ministry at All Nations Christian College in Ware, Herts;
- Married a Roman Catholic in 1977 and shared in worship and expression
- Regularly participated in multi denominational and interfaith events

This eclectic background has given me a broad understanding of the variety of churchmanship across the UK. I believe that this will be invaluable in listening, understanding and taking account of different viewpoints and churchmanship at General Synod; within the Anglican Communion; and in relationships with other denominations.

### Involvement at St John's

- Outreach and evangelism in the parish
- Assisting our local and international mission ministry
- Involvement with our children's groups and youth work
- Developing different styles of worship – In 1970s/80s I started a group focussing on dance and movement. We led worship at churches in the midlands, nationally, and overseas in connection with Canon Tom Walker's ministry. We were privileged to take part in Bishop Montefiore's farewell in 1987; during Archbishop Desmond Tutu's visit in 1989; and to appear on TV.
- Welcoming international students
- Member of St John's PCC since 2013

Currently I am employed by the PCC as Communications Secretary. This role involves:

- updating and writing for the church website;
- sending out our weekly church e-bulletins;
- writing and producing leaflets and materials for courses, events and services;
- working alongside others in Harborne churches; the Deanery; and in the community.

### Professional career and outside interests

Secondary Geography teacher: I served in a number of Birmingham schools. One important subject was international development, and this has led to a lifelong interest in justice and gender issues; particularly equal opportunities for women and girls.

Girl Guiding: I have been a leader in St John's guide units since 1976 and I am still actively involved. I have seen many girls grow and develop their place in society through participating in the guiding programme.

## **Life experience**

Married for 36 years with two grown up children. My husband died in 2013 and it is since then that I have felt a call to the wider church which has led to Deanery (2013) and Diocesan Synod membership (2015), and now to my standing for General Synod.

Peter Jennings was well-known in the UK for his work in religious journalism. He served as Press Secretary to Bishop Montefiore; and to the Roman Catholic Archbishops of Birmingham Vincent Nichols (now Cardinal); and Bernard Longley. He wrote extensively for Catholic and Anglican publications and travelled widely to report on church events, particularly in ecumenical affairs such as reporting on ARCIC; and at General Synod.

## **Why do I want to stand for General Synod?**

My involvement in Peter's work is a major part of my motivation. I assisted with his media work in an informal capacity. I became conversant with the affairs of the church at all levels, and how to promote and publicise issues and events in the media.

My vision is that the role of communications expands and develops strategically within the local and national church; that the way we do this becomes increasingly relevant within and outside the church; and that the local church and the Church of England are known as a source of 'good news'.

## **I think some of the important issues facing the Church of England are:**

- Increasing secularisation in public affairs and the response of the Church
- The outcome for the church in the light of the Pilling Report.
- The place of the church in promoting the importance of marriage and the family
- Evangelism at local and national level to enable the church to be relevant
- The national role of the Church of England as the established church
- The church's approach to inequality in society; the poor and vulnerable.

## **What can I offer?**

- ⇒ *Broad experience of the national church*
- ⇒ *Wide ranging experience of serving in the local church*
- ⇒ *Hands-on experience and understanding of how the secular and church media operate*

I have much to learn about the workings of General Synod but if elected I am keen to play a full part in the proceedings as appropriate, and to research and bring my knowledge up to speed.

To quote *Your voice counts, Synod Elections 2015*: "Everyone has something to offer and the Synod can learn from everyone". It is in the light of this that I am standing for General Synod.

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