Gillian Clarke

I'm a listener and communicator, with experience rooted in my local parish and at deanery and diocesan leadership level. I'm seeking this opportunity to contribute to the future of our church by serving on General Synod.

I have been a member of the congregation at St Mary's Church during the 36 years since we moved to West Moors with our young family. I am currently PCC Lay Chair having previously had two spells as Church Warden - in the 1990s and a six-year term more recently. I edit the parish magazine and lead a Homegroup. My husband, Alex, and I have always chosen to be active in our local parish church. With several moves for work before coming to work in Dorset, our 'local' churches included a modern church in a 'new town', an ancient church in a very rural village, a lively church in a market town and a mission church on a housing estate; all with very different styles of worship in the rich variety which is the Church of England!

I was a member of Salisbury Diocesan Synod for a number of years, a member of Bishop's Council from 2015 to 2024 and was Chair of the Diocesan House of Laity from 2017 t0 2024. During that time, I served on several committees including Mission and Ministry Committee, Renewing Hope through Rural Ministry and Mission, the Steering Group for the Generous Giving campaign, diocesan HR committee and more. This summer, I stepped down from my role as Lay Chair of Wimborne Deanery – a position I held for sixteen years, since 2010. I am currently a Lay Canon of Salisbury cathedral.

Now feels the right moment to think about committing to General Synod, bringing all my experience and I am putting my name forward for your consideration. I certainly can't claim to know the answers to the many challenges facing the Church of England today, but I am aware of and understand the rich diversity of churchmanship, local communities and congregations for whom the decisions made at General Synod have such enormous impact.

Professionally, I have been Head of English in three different schools – comprehensives in Northamptonshire and Hertfordshire, then for 14 years at Parkstone Grammar School in Poole where I was also Senior Teacher with additional responsibilities to promote inclusion and community collaboration. Subsequently, I encouraged and monitored trainee teachers in placement schools on the post-graduate course at Exeter University. As a consultant, I reviewed standards across Examination Boards and worked with schools in Devon and West Sussex on assessing pupil progress.

If elected to General Synod, I would work to make a strong contribution using my professional knowledge and experience and providing an awareness and understanding from a parish, deanery and diocesan perspective. I aim to be a strong voice for laity working in partnership with clergy and others in our local communities as we strive to move forward in our mission to share God's love. In order to do this successfully, we have to work to promote unity within our church, to restore trust and improve the way we communicate with each other and with the world. All this against a backdrop of environmental challenges, changing lifestyles and financial crises in a fast-moving world.

This is a pivotal time for the Church of England and key decisions made by General Synod over the next five years will be critical in shaping our experience of what it means to be 'church' in the 21st century. If elected to General Synod, I would aim to listen well, to be a channel of communication between church decision-making at the highest level and the rich diversity of experience in our local churches.