

## **Candidate's Statement for General Synod election Rev George Newton**



Although delighted to stand for election to the post of Guildford Diocese General Synod Representative, I am deeply saddened by the circumstances of the vacancy, with Fr. Martyn Neale having been a deanery colleague for eighteen years.

### **Personal background:**

I am married and have two adult daughters who have each recently got married themselves. I enjoy cricket (including organising the diocesan team for the last 17 years) and have active links with some of the structures in the City of London and recently took a year part time working for a Livery Company there. Having studied Maths at university, I spent some time in mission and local church work and, after considering a teaching career, was called to ordination instead and was ordained in Blackburn diocese in 1993, with London as my sending diocese. I spent six years in a 'UPA' parish in Blackpool that saw significant growth and renewal before moving down to Guildford diocese in 1999 to take up my current post at Holy Trinity, Aldershot.

### **Current setting and experience:**

The town centre setting, which is the most unchurched in the diocese and in the top two or three most deprived, is particularly challenging, especially with a demographic that has changed considerably in a short period of time. For instance, the parish has grown from around 3,000 to 10,000 in population and has gone from being under 1% non-white British to around 45% in the time I have been there. In looking to reach out to the town and bring the good news of Jesus we, for instance and amongst many things, have pioneered late night and market day outreaches, take assemblies into nine schools, host a night shelter, have run a foodbank, run CAP Money courses, run English classes for Nepalese as well as numerous Puzzling Questions and Alpha courses and pioneered a new type of small group for discipleship. We have initiated links to the medical profession and I have had or initiated three chaplaincies (sporting, civic and in FE). With a large building development in the parish (Wellesley) we are instrumental in the current church plant. Many lives have been touched and changed by the Lord, but there are many heartaches too, as we have seen gentle but steady growth in many areas. The church, with its grounded setting and evangelical, outward-looking ministry, has been a useful training ground for curates and others on ministry placements.

I am currently Area Dean of Aldershot deanery and have been for nearly six years and this covers almost all the breadth of the Anglican tradition. Therefore, with the time and experience in the diocese, I believe that I can represent it fairly on Synod. I have been on diocesan synod for around 8 years and served on General Synod from 2013-2015 so am familiar with many of its ways and processes. During that time, I spoke during the debate about the wearing of robes (voting to amend the canon), on religious freedom/persecution and on Credit Unions.

### **Synod:**

I am a great supporter of the Renewal and Reform movement which, I believe, needs to stay top of the agenda with the key emphases on outreach, discipleship, leadership and prayer, despite many other issues that clearly need to be debated and addressed. I aim to be biblically orthodox but pastorally sensitive in my approach to many of the ethical subjects currently on the radar, including all the areas relating to different aspects of sexuality that need to be wrestled with. One area of interest and experience, that I believe is currently relevant to the wider church, is further integrating those from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds (BAME) into the Church of England and its leadership. I have presented the first 'Rev Mohammad' to the Church of England and may yet do the same for a Nepalese person. Similarly, I am working on a deanery synod motion about the church's approach to this with the intention of this coming up to diocesan and possibly General Synod.

### **Comments from the deanery:**

*For many years, George has been very active in Church affairs beyond the parish and in the wider community. He is currently serving as Area Dean and has been a member of both Diocesan and General Synods. Ecumenically he has worked with other churches and is a key member of Aldershot Churches Together. He spearheaded more than a decade's endeavour to establish a church in the Wellesley 'Urban Extension' where a pioneer minister is now established in a Church owned house. George has a strong intellect and a humble heart. I wholeheartedly support his candidature for General Synod.*

*Richard Cobbold (Proposer)*

*I have known George Newton as a colleague in the Deanery since 2011 and my Area Dean since 2012. He is hugely encouraging of me as a female Incumbent. I have been on the receiving end of his immense generosity. He has a huge heart and has won the respect of both Clergy and Laity across the traditions. He has a proven record of gospel shaped ministry through proclamation and presence - embodying well the five marks of mission as Vicar of Holy Trinity Aldershot for 18 years. His experience, his character and his passion for Jesus and his gospel make him a very good candidate for General Synod at this very important time in the history of the Church of England.*

*Esther Prior (Chair, Guildford DEF)*

*I would like to recommend George strongly as a candidate for general synod. George is a man of faith and integrity. He has a longstanding and very fruitful ministry in Aldershot in which the Gospel is proclaimed and the vulnerable are cared for. As Area Dean of Aldershot, he has steered the deanery through changing and challenging times, and has been great support in difficult times to my parish and myself. George has his feet on the ground and his heart in heaven. He is a deep thinker and a clear speaker and I am quite sure that he would represent our diocese with distinction on General Synod.*

*Mark Hayton (Seconder)*

### **Overview:**

Married with two adult children.

Ordained 1993 with posts in Blackpool for 6 years and vicar in Aldershot since 1999.

Area (formerly 'Rural') Dean since Jan 2012.

Diocesan synod for over 8 years and General Synod 2013-15.

Proposed by Richard Cobbold (St Peter's, Farnborough), seconded Rev Mark Hayton (All Saints, Fleet).

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