

MICHAEL BRYDON

Candidate for General Synod

Proposed by Irene Cowell

Seconded by Daniel Richards



Introduction

At ordination I promised that the Good Shepherd would be my model for ministry. To be a good shepherd it has been said that you need to smell of the sheep. During my long years of small town and rural ministry I knew my people and they knew me. I managed this through things as diverse as church coffee shops and heritage days to being in local pantomimes and founding a Scout Group.

When interviewed for my present post as the Bishop of Sodor and Man's Chaplain, my belief in the local church being part of the community was appreciated. I am delighted to find in Sodor and Man a mixed ecology between traditional church and fresh expressions and that there is a sincere desire for synergy between them.

Outside this diocese, it concerns me that there seems to be a drift in national church thinking away from that sense of parish connection, as evidenced by the way strategic money appears to be spent with a resistance to synergy. We are at a crossroads, and I am standing for Synod to say that parishes are a key part of our missional model.

Finance

One of the big challenges to parishes is how they are funded. One of the most stressful things I dealt with in parish life was finance. At least £70,000 ministry costs had to be raised annually on top of normal running costs and charitable giving. It was very difficult to raise that sort of money, since so many people could not comprehend a system in which it was then handed over to a central source.

By contrast people could comprehend giving money to the fabric, local initiatives and to specific external charitable projects. I think the Church of England needs to accept that the 1976 Synodical 'experiment' of centralising all parish funds has failed. I believe that we need to begin to move back to a system of endowing the local church.

Teaching and worship

I have always loved teaching in the local context through discussion groups, Bible studies, quiet days, trips away, through a magazine and even online. I have always striven to give people both confidence in our belief and joy in our faith. When I ran the Bishop's Certificate, in another diocese, I was always trying to bless communities by offering courses, when they did not have time to administer them themselves.

I take seriously the historic Anglican claim that we do our theology to the 'sound of church bells', which means I believe in a living faith and a God we meet through worship. Prayer makes a difference, and we need to be doing as much of it as we can!

I feel that both my academic and pastoral experience means that I am well placed to contribute to the national church when it comes to discussing the training of ordained and licensed ministries and the whole people of God. Until our congregations learn to talk about their faith with each other, they are in no position to share it with outsiders.

Children and young people

Whilst I hope that I take all age groups seriously, it is a source of anxiety to me that the numbers of children and young people have been so drastically declining across the Church. Over the years I have been heavily involved in the life of local schools, pre-schools groups, youth groups, Scout Groups and Sunday Schools.

The Church of England is a big player in education and the inspection of church schools has become more meaningful. Sadly, the teaching of the Christian faith is unsatisfactory; a Religious Studies approach which focusses on life events, or one major festival, fails to help people to understand the Christian faith. As a Synod, we also need to take seriously the nurturing of faith in the home, since a once widespread tradition of family prayers, Bible reading or grace before meals has been lost.

Living in Love and Faith

It is unfortunate that Synod often views itself as the Church's parliament. The buying into an often-adversarial way of governance means that we are not always offered a display of Christian love and respect for one another. I found my local Anglican church to be a place which simply welcomed, nurtured, and cared for me during my formative years and it is that sense of 'home' which we need to develop and enhance.

I hope that I can be one voice to bring some of that local care to our discussion of *Living in Love and Faith*. One can show love and still have principles. I remain uneasy about any suggestion that Christian marriage can be redefined.

Rooted in the vine

I am fascinated by history, and I like to understand the background to events. I am a firm believer that a plant can only flourish if you look after its roots. It is the same with the Church and I am concerned that a desire to be relevant means that we have been at risk of swapping Scripture, Reason and Tradition for managerialism.

Whilst it is true that the gift of administration comes from the Holy Spirit, it is the local church where the word of God is preached, and the sacraments celebrated; not a chief-executive's office in London. Synod needs to be clear on that.

The days ahead...

When I say the Lord's Prayer and pray for the kingdom to come on earth that describes my vision for the future. I would like to play my part in helping that to be meaningful on General Synod, so that the love of the Good Shepherd is known by all.

Contacting me

Please feel free to contact me with any questions you might have. My private email address is mbrydon86@btinternet.com and my telephone number is 01624 864361 Thank you.

My prayers are with all candidates standing for election.