



CEDRIC PIERCE
GENERAL SYNOD ELECTION
ADDRESS
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I believe that the Church of England is at a major crossroads in its ministry. Sadly, many people in society see the church as either a joke or irrelevant and we need to prayerfully seek ways to counteract this. The message of the redemptive power of God's love is the most powerful message there is, yet we have declining congregations alongside serious financial pressures whilst public perception is that we continue to wrestle with issues with which society has little interest. Meanwhile, some congregations feel that dioceses do not support parishes and are remote, autocratic and out of touch regarding what is happening on the ground. The gospel will never change but the way it is presented has to be relevant to contemporary people and the church needs to adapt itself to reflect this. I believe that the church needs to focus less on its own structures and processes, and more on the central message of the gospel and the social issues faced by local communities, be they urban or rural.

I am standing for the General Synod as I have experience in general management and corporate governance, and have been involved in the change process both in my career and our previous church. I feel that I can add value to The Church of England's overall legislative and governing body. Whilst I would be only one voice in a large Synod, I am willing to play my part in prayerfully bringing about change, which has to start with recognition and acceptance that we cannot continue as we are.

My wife and I have lived in Winsley, near Bradford on Avon for just under 8 years. We both attend St Nicholas church and are Lay Worship Leaders, members of the PCC and on the Deanery Synod. Additionally, I am the St Nicholas PCC Secretary. Until the start of the pandemic we were both regular volunteers at the Ffald y Brenin Christian Retreat Centre in Pembrokeshire where we were part of the welcome and administration team.

I grew up in Hampshire and West Sussex and went to schools with a strong Christian ethos. My parents were Anglican churchgoers. But it was not until I was in my 20s that I realised what all the church stuff was really about, and I became a committed Christian, joining a local Baptist church in south London. I met my wife there and we continued to be involved in that church for about 40 years. I was a Deacon (equivalent to the PCC) and later an Elder, and whilst we were members there, I was directly involved in a major buildings redevelopment, a re-working of the constitution (to be compliant with changing Charity law) and a restructuring of the leadership of the church. These were major changes which were implemented through prayerful thought, consultation, congregational buy-in and determination. The church continued to thrive and grow following the changes.

We moved to Winsley after our family of 5 children had all left home, and we were starting to rattle in a large, empty house! We were fortunate to find St Nicholas church nearby, and we have enjoyed settling back into our Anglican roots and the local community.

Outside the church, my career was firstly in railways and then in criminal justice. Broadly, I joined British Rail at the bottom and spent 10 years playing trains followed by 10 years in local operations and regional general management. The final 15 years were spent in restructuring the industry, privatisation and post-privatisation franchise management at the Strategic Rail Authority and its predecessors, where I was a director. This was a period of unprecedented change in the industry and I was directly involved in a major part of it, being on the team designing the new industry structure, and subsequently implementing and managing it. After leaving railways I became an Independent Member of the Parole Board for England & Wales where I was a member of panels deciding parole applications from prisoners serving long sentences for very serious offences. Additionally, I chaired the Board's audit committee, was a member of its Management Committee and was the Parole Board Vice Chairman from 2015-2018. I continue to sit as a magistrate in the Bristol, Avon and Somerset region.

For leisure, I enjoy walking and aim to complete 2 or 3 long distance paths end to end each year. I like to spend time with our family, too, which now includes 5 grandchildren.

I trust that those casting votes in this General Synod election will make wise choices carefully and prayerfully, under God's guidance.