

# Debbie (Debrah) Mclsaac

## Candidate for election to General Synod, September 2021

PROPOSED BY Andy Larkham, Alderbury Deanery

SECONDED BY Janet Jackson Lyme Bay Deanery

### Dear Colleagues

#### A little about me

I live in the village of Pitton (about 7 miles to the east of Salisbury) in the Alderbury Deanery and have two adult children living in London. Born into a large western Canadian family, I moved to London in the mid-1980s with my English husband.

I practised as a lawyer in Canada and London before becoming Director of Professional Development & Standards for an international law firm based in London. For several years I was involved in an international NGO working with some of the poorest people in the world. This led me to leave secure employment and become a consultant. I was also Chief Training Monitor of the Law Society, Chair of its Education & Training Committee and a member of the Law Society Council. I served as a school governor and, until very recently, Chairman of my local Parish Council.



Summer 2021

I have been privileged to be an elected member of the House of Laity of General Synod since 2010.

*"I am standing for re-election to General Synod to be an advocate for the lay people and local churches of this Diocese and to be a voice for those not in the room"*

### My involvement in the Church

I came to faith in 2001 at a well-known central London church and one year later to the day was confirmed in Salisbury Cathedral. Since then, I have been committed to serving the church as a lay person.

- For five years I was the churchwarden of St. Peter's Pitton. During this time we grew substantially and entered into an ecumenical agreement with the Methodists. Our parish has the same challenges with post-pandemic recovery, precarious finances, caring for historic church buildings and scarcity of willing and able volunteers as many other parishes.
- I serve my local churches in several capacities including as a Farley with Pitton PCC member, Lay Chair of the Clarendon benefice and Lay Chair of Alderbury Deanery.
- A member of Bishop's Council, the Steering Group for the Diocese's nationally (SDF) funded Rural Hope project and Diocesan Synod, I am a lay theologian and have been an Alpha Regional advisor and a tutor to LLMs at Sarum College. I am a Licensed Lay Minister and take services regularly.

I support the Save the Parish (STP) Campaign and network recently initiated by General Synod clergy and lay members which is seeking to:

- *restore* the parish as the strong, caring and healthy heart of the Church of England;
- *recognise* that the parish is the best platform for evangelism (especially in rural areas); and
- better *resource* parishes as the frontline of the Church, recognizing the importance of visible and well-supported clergy

and support other initiatives to *revitalise* the church.

## **General Synod experience**

As a member of General Synod, I have attended all meetings of Synod since I was first elected. I regularly pose questions (often on behalf of others), am called to speak in debates and I

- have served as a member of several Steering and Revision Committees (including the Diocesan Board of Education Measure) which work out the details of new legislation
- was elected 3 years ago to the new and pivotal Scrutiny Committee set up when the legislative process was shortened to provide the scrutiny previously the task of the Synod as a whole
- have been appointed to the small Panel of bishops, clergy and lay members who chair Synod debates and who have a critical role in ensuring a range of views and experiences are heard
- am an appointed member of the Rural Affairs Group of General Synod which has a wide remit including sense-checking proposals for their impact on the rural church, rural economy and on rural ministry and mission.

I am currently serving as a member of the Crown Nominations Commission choosing the next Bishop of Salisbury.

## **Looking forward**

General Synod continues to face big and difficult questions in Church life and in its internal workings including fairness in allocation of resources and costs between dioceses in light of the seeming relentless reduction in the overall number of people worshipping in churches.

In the public sphere General Synod will continue to debate issues much in the public eye such as end-of-life, the climate crises and the Church's approach to human sexuality. A church which is inclusive by age, ethnicity, background and sexual orientation accords with my understanding of the nature of God and the overriding message of God's love for all people.

## **I am standing for re-election to General Synod because:**

- I have a good understanding of the perspectives of lay people and churches in Wiltshire and Dorset, am committed to listening to and representing the views of others, and have a desire to serve;
- I believe my professional training, experience gained in my working life and my roles in the church and other spheres equip me well to be a good representative of lay people of the diocese;
- During my time on General Synod, I have built relationships and understand the structure and processes of this large and complex organisation.

I am not aligned to a pressure group, a specific theological position or single-issue perspective but try to represent the broad and generous middle way of the Church of England.

If re-elected, I will

- continue to press for better support and resourcing of the parish and local churches including an administrative and compliance regime designed specifically for smaller parishes;
- work with others to reverse the growing representative deficit at all levels of the Church and engage with people of all traditions, theological perspectives and ages; and
- listen carefully and bring your issues and concerns to the table.

## **Please consider giving me your first preference vote**

Thank you for reading this Election Address and do contact me by telephone, email or text (contact details below) if there is anything you want to discuss or question me about.



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