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Dear Electors

I am writing this election address to ask you to please give me your number one vote (or a high number). Having been approached last year to put my name forward for election, I spent time in prayer and reflection before agreeing. I am told I have a lot to offer and as a member of General Synod I will take an active part in the decision making of the church.

I am now retired after working in local government and as a charity organiser where I used my ability to listen to and empathise with others as well as coping with a great deal of administration. Christian charity is fundamental to our faith.

I am a wife, mother of two and grandmother of four. Family life is hugely important to me.

- ◇ I have worshipped as a traditional Anglo Catholic for most of my life and have played many roles in parish life, from Churchwarden to Sunday School teacher, from PCC member to Deanery rep. I was the first female eucharistic minister at my church and during a recent interregnum was one of the parish representatives charged with finding a new parish priest (successfully) at St.Paul's Weymouth.
- ◇ Having gained an honours degree in history from the Open University I developed a keen interest in the history of the church and in particular the Church of England. I developed, and together with my parish priest, ran a course on the History of the Church in England which proved so popular we had to run it again. I also wrote a history and guide to my local church. My knowledge of church history gives me the ability to understand the issues facing the church in a broader context.
- ◇ The COVID pandemic has highlighted the need for many to seek a spiritual home. After months of online services we re-opened our doors at the first opportunity and it was noticeable how many strangers appeared among our regular congregation, and most have stayed. It is vital that churches should be open for all who seek Jesus in a place where they can find a friendly, charitable, non-judgemental welcome and it is so important that we retain parochial ministry and resist any move towards centralisation.

It is important that rural communities should have access to a church and to an ordained minister who they know and trust. As public transport is so poor in these areas we must use our resources to keep village churches open.

- ◇ I am keen that this broad, diverse church of ours should remain so. We must understand and respect the priorities and views of others even if they differ from ours. The Church must reflect the needs of the worshippers and be welcoming to all, regardless of their ethnicity or sexual orientation.

“A man with leprosy came and knelt before Him and said, ‘Lord, if you are willing, you can make me clean’. Jesus reached out His hand and touched the man.”

◇ St. Paul’s is in an area of great deprivation. Following the example of those who built the church here, we still reach out to those whose lives have been blighted by abuse, poverty, addiction or other causes and who are so often marginalised by society. I proposed and encouraged the PCC to join the local “Safe Sleep” initiative run by ‘Refresh’, an interdenominational group of local churches whereby homeless people are given a roof over their heads and a bed for the night (often in churches and church halls) and a hot meal during the coldest months of the year, and I delivered those meals to where they were needed.

We have food bank donation box in church which I then deliver to the Weymouth Food Bank every week.

I regularly help out at our own church charity shop which not only provides clothing and other goods at a very reasonable price but is also a place of outreach where customers can feel safe and know they will find a sympathetic ear.

- ◇ God is at the heart of all that we do. In this secular age it is of concern that young people, even those in some Church of England schools have little knowledge of prayer and the scriptures. I am passionate about passing on the faith to the next generations. If you elect me, I will speak up for church schools and confident encouragement of young people to grow in faith"

Finally, we must follow our Lord’s example by prioritising Christian charity and set our own good example to ensure that those who follow us will also follow Him.

I hope that you will feel able to give me your first vote.

Yours in Christ

Gill Cox

Proposed by - Shelagh Hanford (St. Paul’s, Weymouth)

Seconded by - Betty Sutcliffe (St. Laurence, Upwey)