

GENERAL SYNOD 2010 - CANDIDATE FOR ELECTION TO THE HOUSE OF LAITY



MARY SHAW

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Proposed by: Canon Valerie Wallis MBE

Seconded by: Mrs Karen Kember

Weald Deanery Synod

Something about me

I am vice-chair of the PCC of All Saints Staplehurst which is an inclusive church. I was Churchwarden for four years; am currently chair of the Social Responsibility Committee, and a longstanding member of the Finance Committee. I am also disclosure officer for the parish for child protection purposes.

Having studied philosophy and law at Cambridge University in the 70s, I am a Solicitor practising family and private client law in South East London. I am studying for a Masters degree in Christian Ethics at Heythrop College, University of London.

I live with my husband Rory Silkin who is a commercial lawyer, my daughters Anna who is studying psychology at Kingston University and Natasha who is studying for A levels at Maidstone Girls Grammar School, and Huxley an unruly Welsh Terrier. My elderly mother Isabel lives in a bungalow at the bottom of our garden.

I sit on the committee of management of a west London Housing Association and am Trustee of three local charities. I am a member of Amnesty International and a supporter of MIND, Shelter and UNICEF.

Why I am standing for General Synod.

I am passionate about Social Justice – the principle that all human beings are equal. This applies both on an international and national level but most particularly on a community level. I believe that the greatest challenge facing the Church of England today is the declining numbers regularly attending resulting in a lack of financial resources available to meet the needs of the communities which the Parish Churches serve. In his research on

church growth and decline, Rev John Walker has identified some characteristics common to those churches which are growing. These include a sense of significance from belonging to the Christian community being nourished, and support being given in times of major life-change. It is my view that our church will only be able to provide that sense of significance and support to my daughters' generation, and so survive, if it can show that it is relevant to their lives. This will be difficult to do unless we as a church endorse and enforce the principles of equality and human rights, which that generation take for granted and which are incorporated into the civil laws of the U.K.

I am a supporter of the draft legislation for the consecration of women as bishops, which will make special provision for those with conscientious difficulties by delegation from their bishop according to a national code of practice. If elected to Synod, I will also support any draft legislation and Synod statements which push for the inclusion of gay people in all areas of the church, including the three-fold ordained ministry. I am a member of Changing Attitude.

I am, however, conscious of the difficulty that these essential processes cause some devout Christians. I was still at school when homosexuality was decriminalised and the Sex Discrimination and Equal Pay Acts were passed. Therefore, for me equality of gender and sexual orientation is a given – an irrefutable right. For my mother's generation, it is more difficult. We are used to actions being made illegal – driving without seatbelts, using mobile phones whilst driving, using methadone, photographing policemen. But it is hard to think of an example of an action ceasing to be criminal. Therefore, if I were elected I would be sensitive to those church members who do not yet feel comfortable with the creation and blessing of Civil Partnerships for same sex couples, and the adoption of children by same sex couples. We are an inclusive church and that means including and welcoming everyone.

In the meantime, the church must address the management of its resources – both human and financial. All Saints is a training parish and I have seen first-hand the huge contribution of the lay ministry (Readers and ALM's) and also the invaluable ministry of self-supporting priests. I will be interested to see how the restructuring of the bishop/archdeacon representation in the diocese of Canterbury works as a model of leadership. Whilst parishes struggle to meet their share, it is a very difficult but absolutely essential that parishioners are aware of the excellent (and good value) services that the diocese provides.

What I think I can contribute to General Synod

I have managed solicitors' businesses for nearly 30 years and understand financial accounts. As a lawyer, I am used to absorbing and interpreting large amounts of written information! I am in touch with a variety of people of different ages, backgrounds and needs. I have skills in mediation as a method of dispute resolution.

Contact me

I am a regular in the King's Head PH in Staplehurst. A friend in the church has been teaching me to play pool for the last five years and I am still excruciatingly bad at it. I'm not so bad at darts. If you would like to talk to me, please e mail or phone. We could also meet up and play pool (which you will win) or darts (where I have a 50/50 chance).