

Election Statement – Revd Dr Coleen R Jackson, Curate, Portsdown and Purbrook

I am pleased to provide an election statement in support of my 'nomination' to represent the clergy of Portsmouth Diocese at General Synod. I am currently coming to the end of my curacy in the parish of Portsdown and Purbrook. Having lived the majority of my life in London, I moved south to Hampshire in 2000 and came to live on Hayling Island in 2014. I am single and have two very mischievous miniature schnauzers called Barnabas and Jasper. My leisure interests are wide and varied, but I particularly enjoy painting, playing golf and gardening.

Now retired, I had a background in education, where I held senior positions in universities and schools before becoming a Director of my own company and a consultant for the Department of Education. In addition, I set up Waverley Abbey as a Christian College for CWR in Surrey to accredit their counselling and pastoral courses. Much of the last decade in my career was spent working on behalf of our government to advise Ministries of Education and private education companies on aspects of leadership and transformational change. In giving something back to education and attempting to make a difference, I am involved with a national and international Christian Education Trust. I remain an examiner of postgraduate programmes and Chair doctoral vivas for universities.

In the past, I have worked alongside Church House and the National Director of Education to set up a verification process for accredited courses for dioceses, which included advising Portsmouth and Winchester Dioceses on programme accreditation. I have worked with Chichester Diocese as Bishop's representative on the Diocesan Board of Education. My intention would be to bring my experience and skills from my background to navigate the national debates and committee work.

My interest in General Synod began many years ago when, as Deputy Headteacher, my school in Bermondsey was due to become the first C of E City Technology College. General Synod had to agree that one of its schools could change status in this way, and I attended Synod to hear the resolution and witness the vote. At school level, the Governors' meeting finished at 3 am, but Synod went through the process much more quickly, I am pleased to say! I have listened with interest to the various debates at Synod as reported back by our reps at Diocesan Synod and have felt a calling to be part of the team that represents our Diocese. I am motivated to serve at a national level at Synod to shape future discussion and lead to the continuance of unity in the Church of England.

Within the church, I have always played a full and active part in leading small groups, worship, preaching, leading prayer groups, PCC member and churchwarden (for over 13 years in Southwark and on Hayling Island) and more recently in fulfilling a ministry journey that began over 35 years ago. In 2020, I was licensed as a Licensed Lay Minister (LLM or Reader), serving the Blendworth,

Chalton and Idsworth Benefice and occasionally preaching at St John's Rowlands Castle. In 2023, I was licensed as a self-supporting minister (SSM) and became curate at Portsdown and Purbrook.

During this time, I was instrumental in setting up Anna Chaplaincy in our Diocese, which has gone from strength to strength and provides spiritual support for those older in age in our communities. This allowed me to give presentations at various Deanery Synod meetings or groups of churches and see how this work was developing. Having developed and led the training, I met many lay and ordained people across the Diocese and appreciate the time and energy they give to this ministry. Alongside my parish ministry, I have served on Deanery and Diocesan Synod and Bishop's Council. I am also part of a team looking at Self-Supporting Ministry in our Diocese, which accounts for 32% of our clergy numbers. This is a growing feature of ministry in the Anglican Community, especially for those serving in parishes where they do not live.

Virtually all of this year I have spent in a parish with a vacancy, which has given me valuable insight into how parishes cope during this time and perhaps some of the difficulties they face in the 21st century when having to follow rules developed last century. I am hopeful that this, along with some other archaic practices, can be addressed under the guidance of our current archbishop. These and other topics mean raising issues that are relevant to underrepresented groups in our churches. Having had much life experience from my profession and my roles within the church, I know I can contribute to the various debates at Synod, alongside bringing a sense of reality from someone with their feet on the ground who is not afraid to raise and address issues of concern.

From what you have read so far, I am sure you will have gleaned some of the areas that I care about – the spiritual support for those older in age, how children and young people are involved in 'church', developing individuals to take on roles within the church in voluntary or paid positions, and how we serve out in our communities through mission outreach, which is likely to change the whole notion of 'church'. I am also interested in the well-being of clergy serving multiple churches and, indeed, the thorny issue: do we have too many churches, which may mean redefining parishes to continue to serve local needs.

I know some can define the moment that they became a Christian; for me, God has always been in my life, guiding, supporting and caring for me. He has provided me with some amazing mentors along the way who have helped shape the person I am today. In the fullness of my faith, I love the liturgy of our traditional services and equally love the freedom of a more evangelical stance. From the silent retreat to being part of the 20,000 worshipers at New Wine, God has always answered my prayers. From doing mission on the streets of Wimbledon or working alongside the mission teams in Rwanda or Norway, I have enjoyed the richness of God's world. If successful, I would hope to bring the wealth of my experience to the discussion and debate at General Synod in supporting you all.