

Belinda Stanley

*SSM Asst. Curate at Carlisle Cathedral and
The Heart of the City Mission Community*

Proposed by:

Revd Canon Michael Manley *Canon Missioner Carlisle Cathedral*

Revd Canon Ruth Crossley *Dalton St Mary and St Peter Ireleth with Askam*

Why I am standing for General Synod:

I would like to offer my previous experience at General Synod, my considerable professional experience before ordination, and my deep concern for the Church of England, for mission and for pastoral care.

My background:

I was born in Malaysia, the daughter of an army chaplain and a remarkable woman of faith who supported my father throughout his ministry until her early death when I was twenty-one.

Through early experience receiving the ministry of the laying on of hands as a child, confirmation aged eleven and engagement in my teens with the choral musical tradition, I find it difficult to identify when I first responded to God's calling. At university I moved from the environment of my close family to explore my faith journey more independently and was influenced by the Navigators, the university Chaplaincy, the local CofE student church, the Methodist church, and Above Bar Church, Southampton.

I was first asked whether I had considered ordained ministry in my early twenties but, in the 1980s, I understood my vocation to be to work caring for those affected by HIV. While training in London I became involved with CofE structures in the Diocese of London. From London I was appointed to a Consultant Physician post in Carlisle and was elected to General Synod for the 1990-1995 group of sessions when Synod voted for the ordination of women, so I have experience of the church having to manage challenging issues. At General Synod I was enthralled by the theological thought and input of the committed fellow-members and delighted to have the opportunity to debate, to listen, to learn, and to pray with other committed Christians as part of the governance of the Church of England.

My Church of England commitment in Cumbria has been varied - church warden, prayer-group member, Bible-study facilitator, lay-led church worship leader, newsletter writer and editor as well as member of various choirs, synods and committees. I have also appreciated ecumenical worship and welcome from churches in the Penrith area over the thirty-two years I have lived here, particularly from the United Reformed Church (where my husband is an ordained Elder) and the Society of Friends where teaching fruitfully engaged my own two (now adult) children.

In 2010, while continuing to live in Penrith, I was promoted to part-time senior medical roles caring for refugees in Coventry and working for the Royal College of Physicians in London. Later I worked with the charity *Freedom from Torture*. This gave me a growing awareness of my own privilege that I had not previously properly acknowledged, and a dawning sense of calling to sacramental Eucharistic ministry. My theological training was at Queen's Birmingham, where I have recently completed a Master's in Theology. I studied alongside independent students as well as those called to ministry in Black Pentecostal churches, the Methodist Church and the Church of England. This has



both enriched my own faith and practice and made me appreciate more clearly my commitment to the breadth of tradition that exists within the Church of England.

If elected to General Synod I would bring:

general life experience including

- knowledge of disciplinary procedures as a previous chair of General Medical Council Fitness to Practice panels which leads to my concern for good practice in Clergy Discipline Measures
- understanding of research ethics as chair of a succession of Cumbria and Lancashire NHS Research Ethics committees
- whistle-blowing, as well as caring for whistle-blowers within the NHS
- reconfiguring services in the NHS during periods of economic hardship, this gives me an appreciation of some of the difficulties of the post-Covid19 Church of England
- practice and training as a volunteer practitioner with *A Place for Hope*, a charity that “accompanies and equips people and faith communities so that all might reach their potential to be peacemakers who navigate conflict well”
- prior experience of General Synod

experience of recent theological training and the transformation from lay to ordained ministry including

- a greater appreciation that those whose opinions differ from my own are loved by God and are necessary parts of the same Body of Christ
- a commitment to the importance of ecumenical working practice (and some vicarious lived experience of those who feel excluded by the established church)
- a renewed delight in the study of the Bible
- a growing understanding of how my own existence has been privileged and has been at the expense of others who are marginalised by many factors including their ethnicity, socio-economic status, sexuality, educational background, mental health or physical disability and a commitment to try to be an ally to those who have been excluded or marginalised
- a concern for the continuing importance of stipendiary clergy (reliance on SSM deselects many)
- a rejoicing in liturgy and worship
- a working knowledge of trauma theology and spiritual practices that support post-traumatic growth
- a drive for good safeguarding practice
- an increasing concern for ecology and creation and the right stewardship of all God’s gifts
- a passion for enthusing laity into a fuller appreciation and understanding of the ‘Five Marks of Mission’.

General Synod needs wide representation in the House of Clergy. The gifts that recently ordained ministers offer may be overlooked due to a perceived lack of experience, but with my long commitment in the church, many years connection with Cumbria, my strong professional background and previous time on General Synod, I would be ready to represent our diocese. I combine the enthusiasm of the newly ordained with the experience of someone who has served in the church for many years. I hope you will feel confident in giving me your first or a high preference vote. Thank you for reading this election statement.

I would be happy to answer questions that you may have.

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