

General Synod Election Address 2021: Valerie J Hallard

I am standing for re-election to represent the laity of our Diocese on General Synod at an important time for the Anglican Communion locally, nationally and internationally. The national vision for the Church seeks to trust God that we might become 'a simpler, humbler, bolder Church that is Jesus Christ centred and Jesus Christ shaped'. This reflects Cumbria's 'God for All' vision and strategy closely, focussing on discipleship and mission. I would hope to inform the developing national strategy through our experience in Cumbria and also learn lessons from others that might benefit our own Diocese. I pray for a renewed sense of mission in the churches and the Christian message of justice, peace and reconciliation to be heard in our troubled world. Prayer is a specific act of service that we as the Church can offer on behalf of our nation and our world.



My commitment to ecumenical mission as expressed in our 'God for All' vision and strategy is also employed in my role as Secretary to Churches Together in Workington & District. Social and environmental justice is a longing of my heart at all levels- local, national and international. In this regard, the Greenbelt Festival (an inclusive Christian gathering where the Arts meet Social Justice) is an important annual pilgrimage for me. It is an opportunity to experience new forms of worship, ranging from vibrant to reflective, also to listen to contemporary theologians and share with Christians from a broad range of traditions. Locally I'm concerned about the various challenges faced by young people and the increasing isolation and loneliness experienced across the generations, so I see a need for community voices and services with which the churches must engage, either directly in service provision or through individual Christians joining with others of goodwill. Personally, that means volunteering locally with our Foodbank, Nature Partnership, Parkrun, Covid Response Group, and representing the churches on Workington Town Deal Board and our Dementia Action Alliance.

I am a member and churchwarden of my local parish church of St John's, Workington. I enjoy the reverence of its Anglo-Catholic style of worship, but the history of my church membership is very eclectic. I love and value the diversity and inclusiveness that the Church of England offers, qualities that I hope will be reflected in our developing ecumenical Mission Communities.

Currently I am a member of Deanery & Diocesan Synod and Bishop's Council so, if elected, I hope that my General Synod experience can be fed back into those bodies and vice-versa. I have served on General Synod for one quinquennium (actually six years due to the pandemic adding a year of participation through Zoom!). During that time, my maiden speech (yes it's called that!) was in a debate about national church investments and their influence for good or bad in reducing carbon emissions. I spoke up for greater investment in low carbon energy sources, illustrated from our Cumbrian experience. I have been pleased to see this taking shape in the report to General Synod this July by the National Investing Bodies (NIBs). It takes a while to get to know the workings of General Synod and so I have sought to engage fully by reading and listening carefully, asking questions and taking care to ensure that I can make an informed decision when voting on motions and measures. I hope I may receive your vote.