

Why I have submitted a nomination to join the General Synod:

I am presently a member of the Carlisle Diocesan Synod and the possibility of my submitting a nomination to the General Synod was suggested by a friend who is also a PCC member. I have been encouraged by our vicar, who also advised me to seek God in prayer regarding this.

I would first like to explain how I came to be Christian, and to share a bit of my life with you:

I was brought up on a small hill farm in Cumbria, in a church-going family with my farmer dad a church warden and my mother a teacher. I don't recall any shift in my spirit attending church as a child, although the Church Army visited once and there was something vital about their message.

My years at university studying for an honours degree in Agriculture were interspersed with the occasional visit to assorted churches in Newcastle; my flat mates were Roman Catholics, soon to be lapsed. Returning to Cumbria, and partnering in the family business, I married into farming too and we had two children. In my 30s there was a nudge here and there from the One I now know to be the Holy Spirit. I occasionally went to church. I took part time work to help our income and also trained to be an FE teacher, always aware that there was somehow more to life.

Then a lovely Christian family came to live nearby in Mungrisdale and they invited me to a meeting with a couple of evangelists staying with them. This was the best invitation I ever had - what they shared with me was the reality of the living, loving God. A revival in the valley at the time saw several others come to Christ. Life has not been easy over the years but my faith in the Lord has been nurtured by our fellowship, Bible study and prayer.

The Lord provided for me at just the right time when alongside practical farming I was appointed for a job developing and managing a large European Rural Development programme for an Enterprise Agency, where I worked for 11 years. I later moved into similar roles in an arm of the Civil Service which is now part of Defra. During this time the Foot and Mouth Crisis happened when we lost all our farm livestock.

For 25 years I have volunteered for what was the Farm Crisis Network (now the Farming Community Network) which was set up by Christopher Jones, to support farmers under pressure. Christopher and his wife were Christian farming missionaries and they saw the need here on their return from Africa.

A few years after I had come to know Christ, I undertook the *Called to Serve* course, led by the wise Rev Canon Amiel Osmaston. This was a Church Colleges Certificate in Christian Calling and Service, accredited by the University of Cumbria, spanning 12 months of teaching, study, essays and assessments. I have since regularly led services at Mungrisdale church via annual certification by the Bishops of Carlisle who held office at the time, and more recently in my role as Churchwarden.

As church members and followers of Jesus, we know that the world is not what God planned it to be. We see greed and wickedness, disease and disasters, poverty and injustice, lies and deception, and sometimes feel helpless. At a time of worldwide upheaval, we need to spend more time on our knees (spiritually if not always physically), asking God how He sees things rather than telling Him how we see them. The longer I live, the more I realise that only Jesus is the answer; He is the only hope. Jesus did not say life would be easy, but we have the Bible, the revealed Word of God; we have the Holy Spirit to guide us and encourage us; we have the fellowship of our brothers and sisters in Christ, and we have the hope of eternity.

However imperfect our viewpoint, God loves us; He is sovereign and we can trust Him.

We are not *of the world* (John 17 v16) but we are in the world to serve God. We believe that Jesus will return and He will bring justice, a new heaven and a new earth.

I was praying about the role of the Anglican church in this country and was given a picture of a skeletal map with tendrils reaching every corner of this land - ready for us to put the flesh on the bones? It reminded me of a passage in Ezekiel 37 when God said to the prophet "Son of Man, can these dry bones live?" And Ezekiel replied "Sovereign Lord – only you know."

I hope to do my best to put a bit of flesh on the bones while I am still on this mortal coil.

I have submitted my nomination in order to support the Church in its focus on the person and presence of Jesus Christ.