

General Synod election address by Geoffrey Hine

It has been a privilege to serve Carlisle Diocese as a member of General Synod for the last five years and I am now seeking support for re-election.

My career background before coming to this diocese was in Building Society Management, Financial Management and Financial Services. I served the national church as a trustee of the Church of England Pensions Board from 1998-2001. In Southwell with Nottingham Diocese I was Chair of the Ministry Group, Chair of the House of Laity in both Deanery and Diocesan Synods and served as Acting Chair of the Finance & General Purposes Committee. I also had a strong interest in education and served as a chair of governors of a primary school that served a challenging catchment area for ten years.

I have been a trustee of Worldshare since 1998 and am now Chair. Worldshare is an evangelical charity and our strapline is 'In the world's neediest places, Worldshare responds to the vision of local Christians to bring lasting change to their communities.' We work through a global alliance with around 150 partner ministries who seek to bring Christ's love in practical ways – tackling people trafficking, education in South African townships, hospitals in the Congo bringing healing to women where rape has been used as a weapon of war, supporting families who scavenge the rubbish dumps of Guatemala, re-building in Nepal and supporting Christians in Iraq and in many more ways than can be listed here. I recently visited ministry partners in Singapore and Myanmar, and have previously shared fellowship in Serbia, Macedonia, Kosovo and Guatemala.

In 1995 I was licensed as a Reader and continue to serve the wider church in this way. I am a passionate advocate for Lay Ministry and serve on the Diocesan Training Team involved in Reader selection and training, together with some tutoring for the Lancashire Cumbria Theological Partnership in Pastoral Care and Practice. I believe the church nationally needs to pay greater attention to the lay voice.

From 2002 until my retirement last year I served Carlisle Diocese as Finance Resources Officer. In so doing I worked directly with around 190 different churches in the diocese and preached in over 80. My work involved Christian stewardship and supporting parishes in fund raising and taxation issues, grants, charitable status and governance. I represented the North West dioceses on the National Stewardship Committee and worked with the National Stewardship Officer producing resource material for parishes. My knowledge and understanding of the needs of our churches throughout Cumbria from the smallest and remote to the largest is extensive. The rural church can be as vibrant and exciting as the urban but the numbers are different. I believe we need to find new ways of mission and ministry in the rural area and there are signs from the debate on 'Mission and Growth in Rural Multi-Parish Benefices' that took place in February that this is being recognised by the wider church. Outside of the church I am Vice Chair of the Northern Fells Rural Community Development Group delivering services and support to the residents of seven civil parishes in the north of the county.

Since retiring I have continued to serve the diocese as a member of Bishop's Council and a member of the Training Team and on the Readers' Board Executive as well as

extending my Reader Ministry to include leading Sunday morning worship for patients at the Cumberland Infirmary.

The way General Synod conducts its business changed dramatically in the last quinquennium under the leadership of Archbishop Justin. Debates have become less adversarial and are preceded by more work in discussion groups. Thus those of conflicting views on major issues actually listen to each other more carefully. This process allows for a calmer exchange and a genuine learning from the experience of others. This is going to continue to be important in the next Synod as we discuss the developing proposals under the banner of Reform and Renewal. These have far reaching implications for how the church is structured and procedures simplified, how training is delivered and how ministry and mission is funded. It is in this latter area that Carlisle members need to be alert.

The Church Commissioners are planning to release very significant amounts of money to fund diocesan initiatives. Our 'Growing Disciples' proposals which have informed the strategies which are now being rolled out have put us ahead of the game in many respects and seemingly well placed to benefit. However, the outcomes being looked for by the Church Commissioners may put those rural dioceses with sparse populations at a disadvantage.

I am a member of WATCH and have always been a supporter of women's ministry at every level because I believe passionately in an inclusive church. Inclusivity means that nobody is going to feel denied the love of Christ or a welcome in our church. That inclusivity is an issue for many people and I believe in the next sessions of the Synod we are going to have to be sensitive to it. I am supportive of people being in same sex relationships that are faithful and stable. Parliament has voted that same sex marriage is legal and that makes its existence a reality. I believe the church must enter into a dialogue that will allow for married persons of the same gender to feel welcome in its life.

I am opposed to assisted suicide but recognise this is also an area requiring compassion and understanding in dialogue because it touches on so much personal pain and suffering.

I was widowed in 1998 but am now married to Carol, a retire head teacher. Between us we have four children and three grandchildren. My hobbies are walking our dogs, bird watching, gardening and cooking.

Geoff Hine
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