



Heather Black

I was elected onto General Synod in November 2013 during a bi-election and it has been my privilege to represent York Diocese in the House of Laity over the past two years.

I worship in the parish of North Ormesby, Middlesbrough, where I have lived with my husband and two school-age sons since 2004. I have been very active in parish life, developing the work of the Trinity Centre to become a community facility at the heart of North Ormesby. I have also worked with others in the parish to develop Godly Play, in church and both local primary schools. In 2010 I became a member of the accredited college of trainers for [Godly Play UK](http://www.godlyplay.org.uk), training clergy, children's workers and teachers across the Diocese and around the UK.

For the past three years I have been employed as the Development Officer for Together Middlesbrough & Cleveland, a Joint Venture between the Diocese of York and Church Urban Fund (www.cuf.org.uk/together-middlesbrough). This role involves working with churches of all traditions, raising awareness about issues of poverty and developing the churches response. I believe that at a time when many people are struggling in their daily lives to provide for themselves and their families, it is vital that the church remains present and active in our poorest communities. Working for Together Middlesbrough & Cleveland also includes liaising with the Local Authority and statutory agencies, representing the role and contribution of the church in areas of urban deprivation to local government and strategic partners.

I am chair of Middlesbrough Foodbank, working with churches and other organisations to support people facing food poverty in Middlesbrough. I am also vice-chair of Tees Valley of Sanctuary, working with all sectors of the community to ensure welcome, support and hospitality is offered to the large numbers of asylum seekers and refugees housed in Teesside.

I have spent all my adult life in urban areas but my roots are rural. I grew up on a farm in Derbyshire, and have a deep love and appreciation for rural life. I am well aware that the Diocese of York includes large rural areas, where the church seeks to maintain a Christian presence and provide pastoral support to many small communities.

I studied at Hull University, obtaining a BSc in Nursing Sciences in 1987 and worked for several years within various hospital settings in Hull before setting up a new specialist nursing service in stoma care for patients across East Yorkshire, working in hospitals and communities throughout the area.

In 1999 I was appointed as the Development Officer for SEARCH, an ecumenical project providing support to church-based social action across the city of Hull.

Living and working in Hull, East Yorkshire and Middlesbrough has given me first hand experience of different communities across the York Diocese.

I was brought up in the Methodist Church and worshipped in a Charismatic House Church whilst at University and during my early working life. However, it is the commitment of the Church of England to be a Christian presence in every community, and the richness of its inheritance that inspired me as an adult to become a member of the Anglican Church.

During the past two years I have gained experience of the workings of General Synod, and made a maiden speech in the Common Good debate in July 2014. I am standing for re-election for the next five years as I am inspired by the programme for Reform and Renewal and believe I have a valuable contribution to make. Synod will be looking at developing vocations and ministerial education, including lay vocations and training, simplification of legislation to remove hindrances to mission, and resourcing the future in a way that stimulates growth and prioritises resources for mission in poorer communities.

I am a vocations adviser in the Diocesan Vocations team and care passionately about inspiring and supporting people to explore their vocations, both lay and ordained. I have over sixteen years experience of living and working in some of the poorest communities in the Diocese and have worked hard to support churches in these contexts in their mission and growth. The voice of our poorest parishes is often underrepresented in the house of laity and I will commit myself to speaking up for the mission of the church in poor communities.

One of the joys of serving on General Synod recently has been to experience the prayer and grace in which the debate on women in the Episcopate took place. As General Synod looks at human sexuality, I hope to contribute to discussions that demonstrate the same grace and prayerfulness. I hold traditional views of marriage and am committed to actively listening to the views and experiences of others with openness and hospitality.

I would consider it a privilege to represent the Diocese of York on General Synod for a further five years.

Heather Black Sept 2015