



Paul Bakker

Please consider electing me as a member of the House of Laity in the new General Synod.

My wife Mary and I are worshipping members at All Saints in Northallerton; I have also been a PCC member, Church Warden and Treasurer. Though some years ago now, I'm particularly proud of my work in helping to turn round the finances of our struggling Parish when our family lived in another Diocese.

Some of my approach to the Church has been inspired by the late Bishop John Robinson, famous (or infamous to some!) author of *Honest to God* and other books. In *The New Reformation*, Robinson suggests that many people look to the Church firstly as a *gracious neighbour* before they hopefully look for and come to *the Gracious Lord*. I could put it no better – likewise, his definition of God as *the ground of our being*.

I love the traditions of our Church, though am equally comfortable in traditional and modern services. But I am increasingly concerned that tradition merely for tradition's sake is holding our beloved Church back in 2026. If elected, I would strive to help make the Church more relevant to today's needs – but without in any way diluting its core messages. Likewise, I would push for our Church to be placed on more sustainable financial and administrative footings. I'd argue against making *feel-good gestures with other people's money*, whether donated, inherited or bequeathed. I admire both our Archbishops and deplore the treatment they sometimes receive at the hands of the media. Honest disagreements are healthy but must never stray into personal abuse or even dislike.

Who am I? I studied Electrical Engineering at what was then Kingston Polytechnic and English at Birkbeck College in the University of London – an unusual combination, but a good one for a technical writer which is what I've been for most of working life. I also have an MBA from the London Business School. Mary and I fostered for 20 years starting when our own children were still at school. For obvious reasons, we could then usually only "preach the Gospels in silence". I still train foster carers and support those facing serious allegations, mainly on Tyneside and Teesside. I'm also a Board member of the Multi Agency Public Protection Arrangements in North Yorkshire.

Thank you for considering my Election Address!