

## *Richard Mackenzie's Election Address*

Nominated by Dr Tim Scott  
and Canon Richard Liversedge



The Church of England needs to get its priorities right. All too often, it gives the impression of having forgotten what they are.

I'm not writing about what goes on in individual parishes, many of which are doing great gospel-centred work. (And parishes need far more recognition, support, and a larger share of resources, than they currently receive.) My concern is with our denomination, as a whole. If elected, I will conscientiously consider every matter before Synod, but my overriding ambition, working with others, will be to encourage our church to have a renewed understanding of its proper focus.

So, what are its priorities? Surely, they are:

- To proclaim the gospel of salvation and introduce people to Jesus;
- To nurture Christians and enable them to grow as disciples of Jesus with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit;
- To stand boldly for Biblical truth, however counter-cultural that may be.

Those are not the priorities you would think we have from the media coverage we attract nor, sad to say, in listening to too many of our bishops and senior leaders.

We may win praises, and find self-satisfaction, in serving communities with food banks, space for concerts, debt advice services and so on. Those are all good things, and long may they continue, but they are **not** what the church should mainly be about. It is right to be concerned with issues like safeguarding and making our buildings eco-friendly but **not** to be so obsessed with them that we forget our main mission. Similarly, bishops are entitled to their political opinions, but why do some of them give the impression that it is all they want to talk about?

We live in a country with so many people who are anxious, dissatisfied or “empty” of purpose. They need to hear of life in all its fullness – something only Jesus can offer. Whether or not the “quiet revival” is properly named, it is something that is really happening, in a way which would have been rare just a few years ago. People with no Christian background are arriving at churches wanting to find out what we believe. Prominent literary and academic figures are recognising that our faith is worth exploring. Richard Dawkins is yesterday's man! There are growing opportunities to share the truth in which we believe. Yet sometimes it looks as if our national church has not even noticed.

*“But this we know. He heals the broken hearted and stays our sin and calms our lurking fear and lifts the burden from the heavy laden...”*

**We cannot keep it to ourselves.**

## About me and the Church

I grew up in a Christian home and came to personal faith during my early years in secondary school. I was confirmed at that time.

I have worshipped at St John's Newland in Hull for several decades. My wife and I attended on the first Sunday after returning from honeymoon, having bought a house near the parish, and I have stayed ever since. The phrase "being part of the furniture" comes to mind – perhaps you would need a faculty to move me! I have had various different roles over the years and currently I am a member of the PCC and the Deanery Synod.

Church life was pretty shaken in the middle of lockdown when our, then, Vicar not only retired but announced he was leaving the Church of England and supporting the setting up of a new alternative Anglican church. He asked the congregation to join him en masse. Most of them – something like 300 to 400 people – did. I was one of the dozen, or so, who stayed. I understood some of what motivated people to go and wasn't entirely without sympathy, but the Church of England is our national church with both privileges and responsibilities. Its buildings are what most people think of as their local churches. It sponsors 4630 schools. A good, strong, gospel witness needs to be maintained within it. I strongly believed then, and still do, that if there are problems the answer is not to run away from them but stay and fix them. That is the approach that I would now like to bring to the General Synod.

The small group of us who remained, quickly agreed about two things. One was that there would be no rancour towards the new church that had been established. The other was our overwhelming sense that God was going to do something new with St John's. We were not disappointed. He has blessed us greatly. We are once again a thriving church. I believe that having lived through this episode gives me invaluable extra experience I can offer to the Synod.

If I had to put a theological label on myself (and, on the whole, I prefer not to), it would be conservative-ish evangelical. However, I strongly believe in generous orthodoxy. I want to work with, and learn from, committed believers across different types of churchmanship and nuances of theological understanding. We do, though, need to be united around the ultimate authority of scripture.

## Other things about me

I am married with two adult sons and three teenage grandchildren, the eldest of whom is about to start university.

I lead, and partly own, a small business which provides legal and financial advice and accountancy services to its clients. Most, but not all, of them are other small to medium-sized businesses. Despite being past the age when it once might have been required, I have managed to dodge retirement, and plan to go on doing so for the foreseeable future.

I have been in my current profession for a long time now, but the early part of my working life was spent as a full-time official of a political party and, overlapping with that, I was a City Councillor for seven years.