

Celia Oldroyd



Nominated by:

- Joan Foster - Lay Reader and Churchwarden, St Mary's Church, Riccall
- Derwent Deanery
- Tracy Carr - Lay Reader and Churchwarden, All Saints Church, Barlby
- Derwent Deanery

Why am I standing for General Synod?

Mainly a 'nudge' from God and the opportunity to pray and reflect upon the challenge.

About me

I am retired, married with two sons, one of whom is married with two children so I am enjoying being a grandparent. I was born in Plymouth, but adopted through the Catholic Church by my Mum and Dad in Exeter. I attended a teacher training college near Oxford, studying Music and Special Education, both subjects determining my path forward in life. I quickly realised that I didn't really like groups of children so my working life has been quite diverse! After a short-lived first marriage I married Bill in 1980, staying in the Oxford area and commuting to London. Bill continued the London commute when we moved to Didcot, while I looked after the family, taking various jobs to fit around childcare, mainly night duties in Elderly Persons' Care facilities. We then relocated to North Yorkshire, living in Tadcaster for 32 years before moving to Riccall, York, last November to be in the same village as our son and grandchildren. The two major events in our family were:

- fostering 'our Shirley' from the age of 15 to 19. She has autism and learning disabilities and went on to live independently with assistance for many years. We are still in contact with her and she is now in a care home in Doncaster, having developed Huntington's Disease.
- tracing my birth family (without Davina's help!) 20 years ago. I now have two brothers and three sisters in Plymouth after being an only child for over 50 years. They embraced our family with open arms, and there are now several weddings in the diary!

My faith journey

I was raised as a Catholic but it wasn't for me. I spent the college years and early twenties 'in the wilderness', but was heavily involved with sacred church music as part of my music course.

We had our first son in 1982 and our Christian neighbours invited us to attend a baptism course at St Aldates Church, Oxford. The penny dropped for me then, and I realised that Jesus was real and wanted to be in my life.

In Didcot, I attended an evangelical house church under the umbrella of Pioneer churches, where I was part of the worship band for many years. When we moved to Tadcaster, I joined an Elim-based evangelical church in Boston Spa, again leading worship for a number of years.

Then, a very strong 'nudge' from God called me to move to the church where I lived. Frankly, I was not amused as I was very comfortable where I was and the church was thriving. However, I obeyed the call and soon realised that I was part of bringing change to a previously very patriarchal society in Tadcaster. I joined the PCC and was instrumental in helping to appoint our first female vicar. I joined the church choir and also helped with worship. Somehow, I ended up being the Churchwarden for 10 years before we moved last October (yes, my husband did suggest that I moved in!). I am now helping out and getting involved with my new church family.

My experience

I have had a varied career but the main two experiences that I would bring to General Synod are:

- Several years working in Bail and Probation Hostels in Oxford and Leeds. This was mainly working with drug addicts and sometimes alcoholics, often young women trying to support their families by working on the streets of Leeds.
- I then made a radical move at the age of 46 to become a Train Manager for Virgin Trains at Leeds. Three of us were the first women guards at Leeds Depot and certainly worked our passage as women in a man's world! After 5 years I moved to York Station in a Train Dispatch/Announcer/Customer Assistance role. Here I was swiftly disenchanted with the managerial practices, so became the RMT trade union representative at the station, and also on the Company Council. This role, I feel, qualifies me to represent the Laity at Synod. Once again I was a woman in a man's world, but managed to earn the respect of others without compromising my ideals or identity. I listen and learn but if anything needs to be said, then I'll say it!

My other interests

I'm mainly interested in music, reading and travelling, especially to France, hence the picture taken on a Brittany ferry a couple of weeks ago. I love being outside appreciating the glorious world that God created.

I sing in two village choirs and also am involved with the local school, where my daughter-in-law is a teacher. They are particularly keen on inclusion and diversity, and I've been asked to speak to her class about my Christian faith - a golden opportunity!

Why vote for me?

Having worked with many disadvantaged groups in society, and having experienced the attitudes of some people (especially the great British travelling public!) I return to the two commandments Jesus left us: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' That is the first and greatest commandment. "And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.

Faith is not a certainty, it is a living, changing thing.

I have passion for justice, especially for the unrepresented and minority groups in society. I am committed to equality for everyone, at all levels and roles within the church, whatever their status of disability, economic power, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, learning disability, mental health, neurodiversity or sexuality.

I would be thrilled to have the chance to be involved in bringing the true reality of Living Christ's Story fully into the Church of England, so please consider me for your first choice in this election.