General Synod Election Address 2026
Dr Julie Maxwell




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Proposed by: Dr Philip Hiorns
Seconded by: Mrs Alison Coulter

I have worshipped in the Church of England for over 30 years and have had the privilege of serving on General Synod for the past 5 years. I believe that the Church of England has a vital role in making the good news of Gods love and salvation accessible to everyone in all our parishes, whether urban or rural.

Faith and Family:
I became a Christian aged 9 and attended a small independent evangelical church where committed youth workers taught the Bible and gave me a strong foundation for my faith. I also attended camps every summer where my faith and knowledge of the Bible grew.

I studied medicine in Cardiff where I attended church and also became an active member of the Christian Medical Fellowship, this has been invaluable in helping me work out the application of a Christian worldview to the considerable ethical issues that have arisen in my professional life.

I moved to Basingstoke in 1996, after completing my medical training, to begin working in Paediatrics (my dream since childhood) and married my husband Alistair in 1997. We have now been married nearly 30 years and have 3 adult children, our oldest was recently married at our Church.

Work and Voluntary Roles

- I worked for over 20 years as a part-time **Community Paediatrician**. I specialised in SEND (special educational needs and disability), Autism, Language Disorders and children in local authority care. My job involved a huge amount of multi-professional working as well as working with a wide range of different families, safeguarding was a very important aspect of all my roles.
- In 2023 I gave up my NHS work to take on the role of Deputy Director of **Lovewise**, a Christian Charity that seeks to help parents, youth groups and schools to teach on the subjects of marriage, sex and relationships from a Christian perspective.
- I am also a volunteer director of **Coalition for Marriage** which promotes marriage as the lifelong, voluntary union of one man and one woman, to the exclusion of all others.
- I previously served for 15 years as a **primary school governor** with particular responsibilities for SEND and Safeguarding. In my role as school governor we were responsible for supporting and holding the Head Teacher accountable. We regularly reviewed polices and visited the school to monitor the effectiveness of these policies. During my time I was also involved in the recruitment of a new Head Teacher and other senior roles as well as Head Teacher Performance Management. Many of the skills I learned during this time have been very helpful in my role on General Synod.

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Local church involvement
I have attended St Mary's, Eastrop for over 30 years being involved in a variety of areas of ministry included Toddler Groups, Ladies Bible studies and Youth Work. I am currently leading a ladies Bible Study group as well as being generally active in the life of the church and meeting one to one with several younger women. For the past two years I have attended the Proclamation Trust Ministry Training Course one day a week.

My time on General Synod
It has been a real privilege to serve in this way and to be able to use some of my professional experience and expertise to speak in debates on issues such as pornography, families, safeguarding, disability and looked after children (use QR code for video clips).
I also co-led a women's Bible study as a fringe meeting at the last 2 July Synod meetings.

Issues that are important to me

- **Families** – as a Community Paediatrician I saw the importance of stable families for the well-being of children and young people. The Church has a unique opportunity to support and encourage both those in the community and those within the church through marriage preparation, marriage enrichment, toddler groups, parenting courses etc.
- **Marriage** – marriage is an important factor in stable families and family breakdown brings much heartache and negative consequences especially for children. The Bible teaches that marriage is a picture of the relationship between Jesus and the Church. As someone who experienced my own parents' marriage breakdown I am aware that strengthening marriage and providing support for those who are experiencing family breakdown are vital.
- **Faithful Bible Teaching** – the Bible is God's word and is the way that we know God. Teaching the Bible in a faithful and accessible way is key to growing the church. This is particularly important for children and young people who need strong foundations and age appropriate teaching. We also need to think carefully about those with additional needs or who may struggle with accessing teaching and consider how best to help them.
- **Mental Health** – I have worked with many children and young people (and parents) who have significant mental health problems. As Christians we need to carefully consider our response to the increase in mental health difficulties and how we can reach out and support those struggling both in the church and in the community.
- **Societal pressures on young people** – young people today are surrounded continually by influences from social media. They are bombarded with images and narratives that put them under enormous pressure especially in the areas of sexuality and identity. Our culture is highly sexualised with pornography widespread and easily accessible, young people are faced with influencers and celebrities who portray fake and unobtainable images. How can we support young people and provide alternative messages?
- **Safeguarding** – we are all aware of recent high-profile cases in the church where there has been a failure to safeguard the vulnerable. The Church of England needs to do all it can to ensure safeguarding is taken seriously and all are protected.

I am prayerfully standing again as a lay member. I feel that having completed 5 years on General Synod and gained valuable experience I would like to continue using my professional and personal expertise to serve the Church of England. So please consider giving me your first preference vote.

Please do get in touch with me if you have any questions.

Dr Julie Maxwell