

## Election address - John Edmundson

I am standing for Election to General Synod as I believe the voice of the rural Churches needs to be included. A third of Sharnbrook's Parishes are currently in an interregnum. It is difficult to get clergy to apply for these posts, especially if only part-time. St Lawrence, Wymington, where I worship has been in an interregnum for a decade. The city model of a massive church with multiple vicars isn't a practical option in rural locations, where one Priest will typically have oversight of several parishes. Obviously they can't do everything, so it is time to consider empowering the Laity. The Lay Leaders of Worship scheme is a step forward but often the Sunday service is the easy bit. Going deeper into God requires mid-week teaching. In many villages the church is all that is left of a community and its members are often involved in local activities, transforming it from the inside. Making new disciples often leads to them being sent to a city for nurturing, eg Alpha, as a village lacks the resources required. We need to consider how small communities can be supported, not just financially; as once a church is closed it's unlikely to be replaced, even when new housing estates might double the number of local inhabitants, and the local unchurched will have no-one to turn to.

That doesn't mean I can't understand urban churches and their problems. I was born in Wolverhampton, and St. Marks was decimated by the bulldozing of many of its parishioners' homes to make way for the ring road and new market. The church building was closed in 1975 and we moved into our hall. Friendly seats and affordable heating saw the congregation grow. This had been Enoch Powell's constituency, so I'm aware of the consequences of unplanned immigration and the problems when ghettos are created, rather than a welcoming integration into the community. Living next to a hospital, I saw the contribution made by many immigrants.

I studied Electronic Engineering at the University of Hull. Attended St. John's Newland church, (before they found fame on Clayton.TV) where I assisted with the Scout troop. It was at University that I met Caroline, and we married in 1980. We worked at GEC in Coventry designing telephone exchanges, then moved to the Bedfordshire- Northamptonshire border in 1986 to be nearer her parents. I became a Chartered Engineer (CEng) while with GEC, and when Siemens took over the telecommunications business, they encouraged me to get registered as a European Engineer (Eur.Ing.). I still work in telecommunications, for Daisy Group Technology.

I was brought up in a Christian home, Dad was a churchwarden. I don't have an exact date for a conversion; but I know I believed for myself when, about 11, my father had a heart attack and was given just hours to live. Sunday school had always talked about prayer, so I prayed and God graciously granted my father another ten years.

We have been to Spring Harvest on several occasions and to the Keswick convention for the last couple of years. Over the last couple of years Caroline & I have been instrumental in starting a Messy Church in the Benefice. In the past I have also served as Church warden and secretary. I am a member of Sharnbrook Deanery Synod and, as their sole lay representative on the Diocesan Synod, also serve on the Diocesan Board of Finance.

Thank you for your support.

*John*