

Candidate: **Revd Paul Bennett – Rector of Letchworth**

Proposer: Revd Barry Pate vicar of St. Thomas' Wilbury Letchworth

Seconder: Revd Ann Pollington Vicar of St. Ippolyts - Rural Dean of Hitchin



(Baptism of my Granddaughter Alice Amelia -Pentecost 2015)

Who I am

My name is Paul Bennett and I am asking for your first preference vote in the forthcoming General Synod Election. I am currently the Rector of Letchworth – St. Michael the Archangel and St. Mary the Virgin, and have been in post since 2004. I am 60 (just!) and have been married to Debbie for 42 years; we have three grown up sons, and one grandchild.

I was born in the Luton & Dunstable Hospital and baptised at Dunstable Priory Church, (so I class myself as a Dunstablian and not Lutonian – Dunstable was more ‘upmarket’ then!) grew up in Luton and was educated at Ashcroft High School.

On leaving school at 15 I joined the Royal Navy and served for nine years in the Medical Branch. It was while training at the Naval Hospital that I met Debbie, who was in the Queen Alexandra’s Royal Naval Nursing Service. She is originally from Jamaica, but came to the UK when she was 14. We married in 1972. On leaving the RN we moved for a while to Jamaica, and I worked there as a nurse and occupational therapist. On returning to the UK I qualified as a Chiropodist, and was in private practice until I went to train for the priesthood in Oxford at St. Stephen’s House.

I am a Sci-Fi fan, and enjoy reading that genre as well as historical novels, I play badminton, and build computers for a hobby.

My Experience

Although not from a ‘church going’ family, (the only person who ever went to church was my grandmother, and she was happy to go to which ever church picked her up!) It was from her that I was taught faith in a creator God who loves us and wants a relationship with each and every one of us. I had always felt a call to some form of ministry in the Church, but for many years ‘resisted’ the call of God, but of course who can resist him!

I was not always an Anglican. Although baptised 'C of E', for several years I was a Methodist, and for a time was a Methodist Local Preacher. I 'rejoined' the C of E while serving at the Naval Air Station near Yeovil, being confirmed at the same time as our eldest son was baptised.

My experience before ordination was as a PCC member of my local parish; I trained and was licensed as a Reader and served as the Archdeaconry Representative of the Diocesan Readers' Board. While working I studied for a degree in theology. On being selected for ordination training I went to St. Stephen's House Oxford for two years. My training parish was at St. Mary's Willingdon (on the outskirts of Eastbourne), where I was instrumental in setting up a branch of the Council for Christians and Jews, then to Hangleton in Hove for four years as Curate in Charge, before taking up my present post.

I feel so privileged, that through grace, I share in the Priesthood which is Christ's

You may think that I have spent too much time on my biography, but I think it important to show the breadth and variety of my experience. I have had two careers before ordination, have lived and worked in the West Indies and have experience of lay ministry - all of which I believe could serve the Church of England well in General Synod.

I do come from the Catholic wing of the Church, and have some hesitation over the ordination of women to the priesthood and the episcopate. However this does not stop me working with female ordained colleagues in a wide variety of ways, and I believe that I have earned the respect of those colleagues, as is evident by the fact that Ann Pollington was willing to second my nomination.

Important Issues

In synod that issue has been settled, and now we must find ways of implementing the Five Guiding Principles set out in the legislation. We need to embrace the wide breadth of traditions in which the Church has rejoiced for years, to show a generosity of spirit to all, regardless. To that end we need on Synod members who reflect this diversity. As a Catholic Anglican I believe that we need to participate within the structures of the Church at Deanery, Diocesan and national levels, in order that the church as a whole may experience 'mutual flourishing'.

The issue of women in the Episcopate is settled, but there are other issues which the church needs to address, both theologically and socially. 'Assisted dying' which I am totally against - it could lead to 'euthanasia' by the back door, a very slippery slope! And ongoing issues over safeguarding are but two which challenge society and the church. Others are the decline in numbers, both lay and clerical and the challenge of maintaining 'a parish in every community' with more effective outreach and mission, despite the availability of reduced finances.

There are other issues of particular interest and concern the clergy. The simplification of the liturgy, changes to clergy pension, clergy discipline measure, possible changes or even the abolition of compensation if an office or parish is abolished, the centralisation of the churches system, which will allow the Archbishop's Council to make 'orders', therefore bypassing General Synod - I could go on!

I believe that my background and experience can be of use to the church in General Synod.

If you have read thus far, thank you.

Please pray for me and all those standing for General Synod.

I ask that you give me your first or high preference vote.

Yours in His service, Paul Bennett

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