

Canon Peter ADAMS

Election Address for General Synod of the Church of England.

My passion is to see flourishing churches in multi-ethnic inner-city areas of our nation, congregations equipped to be God's people to the community around them. That is expressed in my work based at St Mary's, the town centre Parish Church of Luton, enabling the church to be an agent of peace in our often conflicted multicultural town.

I have lived, worked and worshipped in Luton for eight years. My work in conflict mediation, peace-building and community relations has focused on Christian-Muslim relations in the context of the threats to the town from both Islamic and far right extremists. It has involved me in considerable work with the "white British" community as well as other faith communities, and given me a critical understanding of the challenges we face as a society.

If elected to synod I would bring relational strategies and stories to my voice, encouraging churches to be communities of hope who are transforming the wider community they live among. Much of my work in peace-building can be summed up simply with the question, "How can I be a good neighbour?" With this in mind we have sought to reimagine the civic role of the Parish Church of Luton, and the cure of souls in a diverse and conflicted town - an important question for us to ask.

More widely I bring experience in many dimensions of town life. I work across the churches and am a member of the Churches Together in Luton executive. I'm actively involved in Luton Council of Faiths, and represented them on Luton Assembly from 2009 - 2012. As Vice Chair of the Assembly I worked closely across the voluntary sector. I regularly work with the police and the town hall on Luton wide issues. In 2012 I was nominated by the Mayor as Most Distinguished Citizen of Luton.

My life in Luton now is in contrast to that growing up as a farmer's son in rural Sussex. I am still connected with rural England through extended family who farm, and have a deep love of the countryside, our environment and traditional rural life and customs. This helps me understand the anxieties felt by many towards the changing face of the nation, and the discrepancies between multicultural urban Britain and dominantly white rural / market town Britain. My ability to face in both directions challenges me to contribute to the CofE being a voice for unity in our national life.

In the Church of England world I am Deputy lay co-chair of Luton Deanery Synod, a member of Diocesan Synod, on the standing committee of the Diocesan Board of Church and Society, and a member of the diocesan Race Equality Group. I'm a governor of Wenlock Juniors, the only CofE school in Luton, and have been chair for the past two years. In 2014 I was honoured to be installed at St Albans Cathedral as an honorary lay canon for my work in the Luton community.

I enjoy worship and work alongside people from a wide variety of Christian traditions, traditional small village churches like I knew growing up or evangelical charismatic churches that have been equally formative in my life, and actively look to worship in a variety of church traditions. I have previously worked closely with many churches, Catholics in Ireland, Orthodox in Romania & Bulgaria, and especially both official and underground churches in China. More recently my role as an active deputy lay chair of Luton Deanery has involved working to build unity of purpose across the breadth of traditions represented, and my colleagues would testify to my embrace of all.

Both Church and nation face many challenges in years ahead, and I believe our future lies in engaging with those challenges with grace, truth and hope. My background in conflict resolution equips me to face challenge and conflict face on, and work for hope and positive outcome for all. I believe the best outcome for ongoing debate around sexuality can only be realised in this way, and am firmly behind the approach to shared conversations. Islamic extremism, nationalism and immigration, along with the impact of austerity, will continue to be dominant themes in our national conversation, and a church approaching these actively listening to all, and with justice, peace and hope, is deeply needed. I believe my experience in Luton equips me bring a positive voice to these and other topics that synod addresses in the next quinquennium.