



### **General Synod Address 2021:**

The Reverend Rachel Wakefield – Assistant Curate, St Francis of Assisi Church, Welwyn Garden City.

#### ***Why vote for Rachel – isn't she a curate?***

Hello! Yes I am an Assistant Curate but I was a Lay Reader in the Diocese before this and have nearly thirty years' experience working in media and communications to bring with me. I worked for the BBC for nearly 20 years and have been a communications consultant for Thy Kingdom Come and The Methodist Church as well as being Greenbelt Festivals' Communications Manager before ordination. I have trained curates in communication skills and sit on Bishop Richard's Communications Forum. I have also helped with diocesan webinars assisting churches think about how we might communicate and worship in the future, in the light of the past 18 months. I am also on the Diocesan Synod.

#### ***What has she done?***

At the BBC I launched 5 Live Sports Extra, masterminded John Inverdale's round-UK trip for the first Sport Relief, produced at Wimbledon, ran the sports newsroom, read the Sports News on almost all major networks, and a host of other roles. I also read The Shipping Forecast and midweek football scores for BBC Radio (. . . . .aaaah now you're interested?!) As Greenbelt's Communications Manager I dealt with controversial subjects and debates, handling with a variety of opinions and beliefs. I know how to tell stories in today's media and how to navigate the weird and ever-changing ways of social media. I am passionate about how the Church of England shares God's love with all and tells the story of Jesus. I have preached at St Albans Abbey during Lent and for the Easter Monday Pilgrimage and consider the role of the preacher integral to the communications strategy of the Church of England.

#### ***What is important to her?***

I am called to love everybody no matter how challenging that may be for me as an utterly flawed human being. The church needs to be a place of welcome to all and I stand with the Inclusive Church statement for a church which celebrates and affirms every person and does not discriminate.

I want to help parishes see how they can move into a mixed or hybrid world of doing church as they are able, in order to include as many as wish within our church community and share God's love to those not able or reluctant to come to church.

I want to use my experience as the parent of a child formerly in a wheelchair to highlight the need for churches to include and accept everyone, particularly those on the margins.

I want the church to think about how it cares for creation and what it can do to combat climate change.

I want parishes to thrive and be communities in which all feel welcome, regardless of their personal faith or standing with the church. Where new ways of sharing our faith can be tried alongside the traditional liturgy so many love.

I want everyone to feel welcomed within God's church, no matter who they are or how different their views might be from mine.

I want the church to be a safe place where we listen, respect and care for each other, where safeguarding underpins all we do.

Having been a Lay Reader, I completely support the need to encourage and involve lay people in the life of the church and sharing our faith with others, but the church needs to be

able to adapt to the commitments of lay people if we are to help them to do this. I believe the parish structure to be one in which lay workers should be able to flourish and develop accountable worshipping communities alongside the current work and their colleagues in the parish.

***Okay, but where did she train?***

I trained at St Mellitus on a part time pathway over two years while juggling a family and three other jobs. It was definitely formational! Working for Greenbelt at the time raised some interesting discussions within college and I believe I fully appreciate the need for the Church to hold together all traditions and theologies in what college ambitiously calls Generous Orthodoxy. There is room for all at the table. Having been brought up in the household of an ecumenically minded Methodist minister, I have a strong sense of the bonds between the denominations and the differences which need to be navigated between the two to continue to grow together. It also always seems to surprise people to discover I am much more at home within the Anglo-Catholic tradition and having worshipped in almost all traditions over the years I hope I am respectful of all.

***But she's still just a curate.....***

Yes, this is true. But as someone who was ordained during the first year of lockdown and whose curacy looks far from anything most of you would recognise, I am one of a highly adaptable and resourceful cohort of curates who have had to learn as the church changed how it might operate. We have been resourceful and found new ways to do things.... you might even say we have all been pioneers. I understand how important issues such as relationships and climate are to young people and those on the fringes of the church, and how these need to be addressed sensitively so that all people find a welcome in the church. I hope to use my communication skills to advocate for inclusivity, and to speak out for those I represent.

Also.... Because I am "just a curate" I have questions and am curious. I want to hear your questions and ideas too and hope you will give me your first preference vote. You can email me at [rachwakefield@outlook.com](mailto:rachwakefield@outlook.com). I look forward to hearing from you.

**Proposed by: The Reverend Canon Dr Dennis Stamps:** *I am nominating Revd Rachel Wakefield because she has exceptional communication skills from her career in the BBC and other life experience. Rachel is also a creative, outside the box, thinker. She will use these to help ensure the CofE remains inclusive and committed to environmental issues. She will also support the local parish as key to the church's ministry while being open to imaginative mission.*

**Seconded by: The Reverend Kathryn Alford:** *Rachel would be a real asset to General Synod offering an impressive array of professional expertise, skills, and personal qualities. Her considerable experience in media and would be invaluable at a time when effective communication through a variety of modes is imperative to mission and evangelism. Rachel is organised and able to both consider the strategic big picture and enable its' delivery. She can think on her feet, is good humoured and extremely articulate in putting forward her point of view. She is sensitive to the diversity of thought in the Church of England, viewing this as a strength rather than a hindrance. As an inclusive and collaborative leader, she strives to take on board as many positions as possible and is extremely diplomatic in engaging with people from all backgrounds. For all of the above reason, I have no hesitation in nominating her, and in supporting her application.*