

Paul Hobbs – Candidate for Membership of the General Synod

Dear Voter,

About myself

I am 64 years old originally from Bermondsey, London and I have lived in the North East for the past 30 years. I have been a member of the Church of England all my life. I attended two Church of England schools, and I put a big value on a Christian education and working with young people. I trained at West Hill College, Birmingham, as a Youth Worker and later at Oak Hill College, where I gained a degree in Theology. I grew up in a Christian Youth Club and was confirmed at 18.

In my adult life, I have been a youth worker for sixteen years, before I became a Prison Chaplain, a position I held for sixteen years. In 2014, with the help of others, I pioneered the founding of a Community Chaplaincy, The Shirley Community Chaplaincy (North East), which I continue to serve, together with an Administrator, under the guidance of Trustees and a Management Committee.

Among my hobbies are playing golf, going fishing, watching professional football, all of which I do occasionally in the company of Shirley clients and volunteers. I am currently building a joinery workshop.

My values

I want our Church, the Church of England, to flourish in all the abundance that God can bring us. I believe that this is best served in following our saviour Jesus Christ and in keeping with his values. I am a people-person, open to dialogue and building relationship, and I try to engage with partners and associates in an atmosphere of mutual respect.

My work

The Shirley Chaplaincy works with vulnerable people: those with criminal convictions and their families, both men and women. The focus of my work is primarily pastoral, although I am involved in helping clients to work through practical issues concerned with housing, energy supplies, food and clothing. The Chaplaincy has a spiritual base in Greenside parish, in the north of the diocese, where several of our clients have found a warm and sustained welcome, and we offer a listening ear as well as outings and residential experiences.

I have promoted issues arising from Shirley's experience with national leaders in both church and national chaplaincy forums, and I have sought to bring national guidelines to bear at local level. I would love to enable more local churches to have the confidence to welcome people who have had convictions at their services and events and to experience the reciprocal blessings that can bring.

My church involvements

I am a licensed Reader at Greenside in Durham, following my training and time as a licensed Reader in Newcastle diocese until 2014. I am also Lay Chair of our deanery synod, Gateshead West. I have been an active member of the Diocesan Synod and Bishop's Council for the last five years, and I have served on the Vacancy-in-See Committee. I have seen how important good governance is at every level of church life.

What I will bring to the General Synod

I have seen much poverty and depression in the diocese and have an understanding of the national north-south divide. I will do all I can at General Synod to address this and to encourage the building up of meaningful resources in our diocese and her churches. I will promote the needs of the poor and marginalised.

I very much want to encourage lay participation and involvement in our churches and communities. I believe that I am a good communicator, and that I have the skills to mediate in difficult and stressful environments. I am a good listener with a genuine care and love for people. I have a good understanding of Safeguarding, am committed to its focus on creating and sustaining healthy communities and relationships, and I have a good knowledge of addictions and the criminal justice system.

I give my word to serve God, His Church and His peoples to the best of my ability.

Please support my nomination

Paul Hobbs