

THIS HAS TO BE ABOUT LOVE.

We follow Christ out of love, we lead His people out of love and we work together out of love for the Kingdom which is yet to come. This Diocese, indeed our whole nation, is suffering because the love of God is not being proclaimed in a way which has credibility – our internal arguments are heard before our external Gospel proclamations and it is time that we stop speaking about love and, instead, let the love that pervades us and our faith and our congregations seep visibly out of our structures. We should stink of love, and by that, bring hope to our communities – or we will die.

Like all of us, I encountered the life changing love of Christ and gave my life to His service. That took a formal step in the Church when I was ordained in this Diocese in 2009. Before that, I had owned a restaurant and been a Stage Manager. I served my curacy in what was then Preston City Parish – St John's Minster, St George's Friargate and Christ the King County Hall. This coincided with the Preston Guild, and I was heavily involved in volunteer coordination as well as producing and directing the Guild Show. I was also involved in the Board of Education, notably chairing tribunals and as a Governor, particularly in a time of great change for one of our schools.

I left Blackburn Diocese and spent ten years in London Diocese, as Vicar of a parish, Area Dean of Brent, Met Police Chaplain, Chair of Governors of a school and Deliverance Minister. During an long Archidiaconal interregnum, I conducted a number of Visitations, and the first thing I asked every PCC was 'are you happy' – everything else, from growth to outreach to community engagement to public perception comes from that, and if the answer was 'no', I would work hard with them to find out how they could be happy and confident in their mission. As Area Dean I interviewed for a large number of posts and turned the fortunes of that Deanery around from failing to growing – through love, I hope and believe, and by appointing women and men who felt called to share in the revival of that Borough. The Parish I served also grew and underwent complete rebuilding – physically and spiritually.

Change management is in my DNA and has run through my work in the church, theatre and my own business. I am now Vicar of St Stephen on the Cliffs in Blackpool – a place I love and am blessed to serve. We are also changing here, and reflecting the light and hope that Christ has offered to this beautiful place.

THORNY ISSUES.

We do not serve in the Church to reflect our own wishes, but to advance the Kingdom, I believe. To an extent, my own views (which have evolved over time), are of little importance, but I know we live in polarised times. I hope to nurture and encourage all of our deeply thought through beliefs as well as to be true to my own. I would seek to affirm every member of the Body of Christ as being of equal worth and value in the loving sight of God in whom there is no division and in that loving sight we can always find a common ground and mutual love, which transcends any other division. For that reason, I will refrain from conducting same sex weddings.

It is sometimes said that 'safeguarding' has become the fortieth article, often by those who would struggle to list more than half of the other ones! In fact, it pervades all that we do, and having attended two schools with serious sexual abuse issues at the time that I was there, leading to lifetimes of struggle and indeed the death by suicide of classmates, I am not always sympathetic to this point of view. With that, I am also keenly aware of the need for the church to speak out bravely, indeed at personal cost, about the issues of (often young and middle aged male) death by suicide and to speak and listen around the Euthanasia

debate, reminding ourselves and others about the sanctity of human life and our sharing in the Body of Christ.

We also need to speak more convincingly about racial justice. As Vicar of Harlesden (the most ethnically diverse part of London) and growing a church there, and Area Dean of Brent (the worlds most diverse Borough!), I hope I have gained enough experience to do so, as I have done for years now. I have a solid track record of encouraging new congregations using Bishops Mission Orders, for Tamil, Hindi, Romanian, Senegalese, and other new communities in Brent. We moved from being a completely white British led Deanery to a Global Majority led area, reflecting the people we came to serve, which was a cause of great joy to me. There is national and local work to be done around Racial Justice, but money does not make up for strategic, equal growth and a genuine sharing of leadership.

Love is where this will flourish. And love is the cornerstone of climate change action as well – love for members of the body of Christ who we will never meet, and who are not yet born.

LOVE IN PRACTICE.

I've been a member of Diocesan Synod (in two Dioceses) from my Diaconal year, with only two, month long breaks while moving. I believe in our structures and in our Church, and I yearn for the Holy Spirit to make us into the united agent for the proclamation of the saving power of the Gospel as we are individually to our own communities. It has to be both. It has to be together. Love in practice forgives, it binds, it reconciles and it brings hope and this is our goal, I hope, as it is for our Deanery Synods, our own Parishes and in our own families.

We do such good, Gospel work for our communities and there is so much more that binds us than that which divides us, so modelling good disagreement is a call on our duty at this present time, not because our disagreements do not matter, but because there is something that matters more, and our credibility lives or dies on whether we speak of Christ or of our fallings out. I have a lot of hope in us, and I seek your trust in electing me to the General Synod so that I can show the hope and the love that we so clearly bear for the people of Lancashire in the national church. And I hope that I can offer a different voice, and a listening ear in the maelstrom of the current climate.

ABOUT ME.

I am forty nine years old, Mancunian but I've lived around the country and in other countries. I love cooking, I make my own Damson Gin, sail, walk in the hills, read, write. I believe passionately in the parish system and in fostering vocations (have many people heard about Christ from a priest with fifteen parishes to run?) and I am a firm believer in lay leadership, and have fostered the first LLM's ever in my last two parishes. I have been a sector chaplain as well, and experienced at first hand the importance of Chaplaincy and Chaplains.

I am, I think, experienced enough to have a solid track record but young enough to desire change and renewal. People from all walks of life have said that they trust me, and I hope to be able to carry your trust as well into the next few years on Synod.