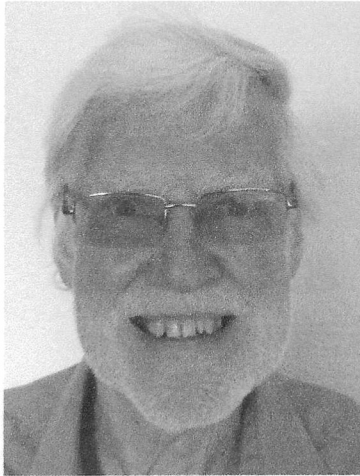


**Dr John F Beal MBE, PhD**



**Why am I seeking election to General Synod.** Quite simply because I think that the Church of England can do better than it does at the moment. And that starts at the top. Let us remember that the basic structure of the Church of England is the parish system. Everyone whether Christian or not lives in a parish. It is the backbone of the Church of England. That is why I am an active supporter of **SAVE THE PARISH**, an organisation that campaigns to support the continuation of keeping the parish system each with a parish priest in a leadership role, even if they have to be shared with other parishes.

But look what has happened in some areas such as Wigan in the Diocese of Liverpool? They had 33 churches in 29 parishes. They abolished all the PCCs and combined the churches into 7 'hubs'. In spite of a grant of over £1million the number of clergy, which had been 24 and had already reduced to 18 is now 13. Church attendance and donations have both reduced by 30%, and 19 of the churches are now identified as being at risk of closure and, of course, they now have no PCCs to fight their corner. Such schemes must be stopped. Furthermore, the number of staff employed at a central level has increased in many dioceses but the evidence clearly shows that growing parishes are those served by a parish priest on the 'shop-floor', not by a director of this or that at the diocesan office. **Keeping parish priests must be a priority.**

Another problems is that too many diocesan bishops seem to think that their primary role is to be the CEO – the manager or the politician rather than the pastor. Yes there is a management role for the bishop but the pastoral role is more important. The primacy of the management role appears to come from the top down. It has been widely reported that the former CEO of the Post Office was supported by the Archbishop of Canterbury in her application to be Bishop of London. Whether that is true we cannot be sure. But we do know that she had spent much of her career in management but her only experience in a parish was as a self-supporting minister, not as the parish priest, at a Church in St Albans Diocese. And even worse, it has now been revealed that in 2018 she wrote a report (to date not officially published) on how to implement a proposal to close over 1000 churches. This included a much tighter control by the central church authorities because of local opposition. General Synod elects 6 voting members of the Crown Nominations Commission

which is responsible for nominating new bishops. We need **ensure that most new bishops are appointed from among the clergy who have experience of successfully running a parish.**

General Synod has already embarked on the process of deciding to what extent the church should implement the proposals developed following discussions on **“Living in Love and Faith”**. Synod, by the narrowest of margins, has already agreed to prayers for blessing same sex couples. I am very clear that **biblical teaching is that marriage is a lifelong union between one man and one woman and that sexual intimacy belongs only within marriage.** I watched the whole debate in November on YouTube and can clearly state that, had I been a member of General Synod, after listening to the arguments I would have voted against the motion. Clearly every vote counts and my vote would have resulted in the proposal for stand-alone services of blessing being rejected. But let me be absolutely clear, I totally agree with the Bishop of London when asked about LGBT people in the church, she said that **“What we have to remember is this is about people, and the church seeks to demonstrate love to all, because it reflects the God of love, who loves everybody.”** We need to **welcome everyone** irrespective of gender, race, sexual orientation etc and we don't always do that.

And I also have a concern about the **future of the Anglican Communion**. Last year both GAFCON and The Global South, the two Anglican bodies that together represent 85% of all Anglicans worldwide, voted to no longer regard the Archbishop of Canterbury as head of the Anglican Communion because of the CofE decision which fails to honour the Lambeth Conference Resolution regarding homosexual practice as incompatible with Scripture and introducing the blessing of same sex unions.

It is really important that we do not follow our brothers and sisters in the Methodist Church whose numbers are decreasing even faster than ours in Church of England. Indeed, Methodist ministers have recently been issued with guidance not to address the members of their congregation as ‘brothers and sisters’ and also not to use the terms ‘husband’ or ‘wife’. We should avoid making such silly rules and **not introduce such woke policies.**

Finally, a bit about myself. I am a member of Diocesan Synod, Lay Chair of East Leeds Deanery Synod and member of the Leeds Episcopal Area Mission and Pastoral Committee. Having twice been elected to General Synod I know my way around and would quickly fit in for the remaining part of the current sessions which are more than halfway through their term. In all these roles I am the **voice of the laity in the pews**. Too often the voice of the laity is not heard or is ignored. I would be very grateful if you feel able to put me high in your voting preferences. If you want to contact me further my email address is [johnfbeal@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:johnfbeal@hotmail.co.uk) I would be happy to hear from you.