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Dear elector,

GENERAL SYNOD ELECTION 2015

Your vote is important in this election. If you share some of my views and concerns, as set out below, please vote to give me the opportunity to continue to represent you on General Synod.

Who I am

Aged 48 and single, I am a graduate of Leicester University and a statistician in the civil service. I commute daily to London, where I am currently responsible for publishing statistics on planning applications at the Department for Communities and Local Government, having previously worked on local government finance and homelessness statistics and the Department's business plan.

I have lived in Rushden all my life, except for my time at university, and, since my late teens, have served on various church committees. I am currently Lay Chair of Higham Deanery and Secretary of the East Northamptonshire Faith Group - which has been set up as a charity to encourage churches and other groups to serve their local communities. I have played a leading role in instigating and organising the two annual 'Discipleship in Action' days that the Diocese has held to encourage lay people to get involved in local community projects and similar activities. I am currently helping to organise the next one, at Corby on Saturday 30th January.

I have been an active member of Whitefriars Church, which meets in a local community school in Rushden, ever since it was planted by St Mary's Church in 1991. I currently chair its Youth and Children's Committee and am a leader of its Countryside Walks group. I am also a governor – and Resources Committee Chair – at the junior school where the church meets. Aside from church activities, I planted a small wood on some land I bought near Harrington several years ago, and am currently developing ways in which it can be used by the wider community, e.g. given the research findings that many people thrive when out in the countryside. I also enjoy researching family and local history and exploring the countryside, particularly locally and in East Anglia.

I have been on General Synod since being successful in a by-election in 2003. Since then, one of my main contributions has been through taking the opportunity to ask questions, both to highlight areas of concern and obtain information. These have been on a wide range of subjects varying from the low take-up of funding for mission projects that could be 'scaled-up', to rules which apparently banned the use of jam jars at church fetes. I have also recently been one of the General Synod representatives on the Council of Ridley Hall, Cambridge, and am a member of the Church of England Statistics Reference Panel.

What I think

The approach that I usually take in deciding what I think about a particular issue is to consider it on its own merits, listening to all sides of the argument – locally as well as nationally – whilst trying to be obedient to what I understand the scriptures to be saying. Although Christians can often ‘go with the flow’ of the world around us (e.g. by doing our bit to minimise climate change), I believe that we sometimes need to be counter-cultural. My views on a few key issues are:

- **Church growth:** I welcome almost anything that challenges the idea that the Church of England should be in the business of managing numerical decline. I believe the Great Commission (in Matthew chapter 28) to be as relevant today as ever. I therefore greatly welcome the growing emphasis on encouraging churches to become healthy, and outward-looking, sharing the Good News through both words and actions. I am keen for the central church to help this to happen as far as it can, such as by continuing its ‘simplification’ programme, to identify and then remove barriers to mission.
- **Discipleship:** I welcome the recent appointment by the Church of England of a Head of Discipleship and Vocation, which hopefully indicates an increased recognition of the huge number of opportunities that lay people have for living out their faith in their day-to-day lives – including the 95% or more of time which the vast majority of people spend working, resting and playing *outside* the church structures.
- **Human sexuality:** during the next five years Synod will be considering the issue of human sexuality in the light of the 2013 report of the Working Group on Human Sexuality (the Pilling report) and following the shared conversations currently taking place nationally. I share the view of Bishop of Birkenhead in his dissenting statement in the report that there is no scriptural basis for a change in the Church of England’s teaching on this matter.
- **Decision-making within the Church of England** – although the General Synod is by no means perfect, I welcome the way in which it brings bishops, other clergy and lay people together to make decisions for the good of the whole church. I oppose any attempts to sideline the role played by lay people or by clergy who bring a view from the grass roots of church life. I therefore support efforts to ensure that the forthcoming Enabling Measure removes unnecessary bureaucracy from Synodical decision-making, without riding roughshod over the wisdom and experience of the man or woman in the pew.

I would be very happy to discuss any of the issues listed above, or anything else, with any elector. I would also be very pleased if you gave me your first preference vote or, any other vote that you feel able to give.

Yours faithfully

ANDREW PRESLAND

Proposed by: **Mr John MacMahon, Brackley** (Lay Chair of Peterborough Diocesan Synod and Chair of the Peterborough Diocesan Faith at Work group)

Seconded by: **Mr Peter Coatham, Oundle** (Lay Chair of Oundle Deanery, and member of Bishop’s Council, Peterborough Diocesan Mission & Pastoral Committee and Peterborough Diocesan Synod)