

Dr Nigel Aston



I have been a committed Anglican since my teenage years with a record of involvement in many parishes in different dioceses over the years. I am currently a member of the Peterborough Diocesan Synod for the Kettering Deanery.

Professionally, I am a religious historian in the School of History at the University of Leicester, someone who is familiar with the story of the Church of England since the Reformation. I have published extensively on the subject, for instance on many of its archbishops, bishops, and clergy in the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. I am member of the Church of England Records Society and have served on its governing council.

I believe passionately that an understanding of its past is profoundly important as a basis for making the right decisions about the Church of England's future.

I would really appreciate your first preference or other high preference vote.

So let me briefly give you an idea of how I see the key issues and where I stand on them.

Parishes. Resources have to be used wisely and the priority should be use for mission in every parish and, crucially, with parishes having more say in how resources are used. Rural ministry in particular would benefit from an injection of additional funding that could make an appreciable difference in our worship and outreach.

Clergy. To put it bluntly, we need more full time priests from every tradition in post if mission and renewal are going to be visible and attractive, and this has to be a key priority. And we need to encourage vocations to the sacred ministry among young people. Bishop Donald is committed to this goal and, as a diocese, we can offer a model of good practice to the rest of the Church of England by putting full time clergy in as many as parishes as possible.

Evangelisation. This is not just for evangelicals. Whatever our churchmanship, we need to do all we can to increase our numbers, to focus on the future, to bring in younger people and involve them more. Unless we do this, our future as a Church is bleak, and we will be failing to bring the Gospel message of salvation to the world outside. It can be done, and we have begun to do it in the Peterborough diocese, as Bishop Donald's confirmation of a 1% increase in numbers indicates.

Men. Adult males who are not retired have almost disappeared from many of our parishes. This is a vital issue the Churches seems reluctant to confront. We need to ask ourselves, unflinchingly, what is we do or don't do as Anglican Christians that is unappealing to the average man, and then act.

Women bishops. We must respect the House of Bishops Declaration and the Five Guiding Principles it contains unreservedly. We should rejoice in the Church of England's diversity, encourage mutual flourishing, and offer the wider world a model of how to deal with difference.

Homosexuality. Homosexuality is a sensitive issue for all Christians, as the House of Bishops has accepted when it reiterated its decision to be faithful to the Church's tradition on the issue. Homophobia, however, is unacceptable. We should be sensitive to registering rapid changes in public attitudes while upholding scriptural teaching that marriage is between a man and a woman.

I am committed to a generous future for the Church of England that takes pride in its past.

Should you wish to discuss this further, please contact me : Telephone 07792490077 Email nra1710@gmail.com