

My name is Wendy Haynes. I am 68 years old and live and worship in the parish of St John the Baptist, Ruyton XI Towns in Ellesmere Deanery. I was born in Kinver in South Staffordshire, and was baptised and confirmed at Enville, where my father was organist and I sang in the choir and taught in the Sunday school. As a young adult I was attracted to more evangelical churches with an emphasis on biblical teaching, an active faith and lively informal worship styles. After marrying my husband Paul and starting our family we moved to the parish of Penn Fields in Wolverhampton, where Paul became a Christian through attending an Alpha course at St Philip's Church. We were members at St Philip's for over twenty years and I served in many roles during that time. I led an 'Explorers' Sunday School group, hosted a house group, and helped to run a group for young mothers. I was a member of the family service planning team, and took part in leading services, reading lessons, presenting dramas and leading intercessions. I also served on the church committee and PCC, and was the representative at Trysull Deanery Synod. I completed both parts of the original Bishop's Certificate course. My main area of ministry developed from my longstanding interest in church music, whether traditional hymns or contemporary worship songs. I had responsibility for choosing hymns and songs, and also played the organ. I set up a music group and worked closely alongside our vicar to introduce a more modern style of worship into our morning services. The group grew into an effective worship team with members across a wide age range, and with varying musical abilities, joining together to lead the congregation into worshipping God, and we were very blessed! I was able to hand over leadership to a very talented member of the team who continued to develop the work. With our children growing up and (almost) leaving home, Paul decided to take a job in Fife in Scotland, so we moved there for ten years. We found it difficult to settle into a church there, torn between the parish-based Church of Scotland, and the Anglican-linked Episcopal Church. I missed the sense of belonging I had previously found in Church of England parishes with deep community links and a welcome for all. We returned to England when we retired two years ago and now live in Ruyton in North West Shropshire. In a sense, I am back where I started, worshipping in a traditional ancient red sandstone village church, surrounded by noisy rooks! I am on the PCC, represent the parish at the Ellesmere Deanery Synod, and occasionally fill in on the organ. I am a member of a team that presents bible-based drama in local primary schools. Recently our vicar has retired, and I am honoured to be part of the lay leadership team co-ordinating worship during the vacancy. I have special responsibility for choosing hymns for morning services at Ruyton, and at Little Ness and Great Ness, the other two parishes within the benefice.

Outside of church life, I have had two main careers. After a degree in mathematics, I moved into computing, and became a computer programmer and systems analyst, working for a building society and an insurance company. I struggled to combine working in IT with bringing up my three children, so studied to qualify as a librarian. Jobs

followed in FE colleges and universities, public libraries, and finally in the NHS, which I thoroughly enjoyed. Alongside working, I have continued to study with the Open University, and now have an MA in History. Local and religious history are particular areas of interest for me, and my studies have included a number of projects looking at the role of churches in the community. I am involved with several aspects of village life, including being secretary of Ruyton WI and a member of the local garden club. I have also joined Ruyton Amateur Theatrical Society, and acted in three recent productions. Other interests include rambling, taking part in (and setting) quizzes, and researching family history.

If I am chosen to serve on the General Synod, I would want to do all I can to increase the effectiveness of the Church of England as a witness for Christ in our country and the wider world. I believe in the strength of the Church of England as a presence in every parish in the country, welcoming all believers and seekers after Christ. I have seen first-hand how important this is in both city and village parishes. I think the parish structures have been eroded over the years, and we need to take urgent action to ensure that parishes are properly supported with better funding and better staffing. We must do all we can to halt the creation of huge benefices, the merger of parishes, and ultimately the closure of our churches. Spending priorities need to be changed to direct more funding to grass roots level. More needs to be done to attract entrants into the clergy and to improve their training, and to better support parish priests to ease stress and exhaustion and prevent clergy leaving. To these ends, I fully support the aims of the “Save the Parish” campaign.

While I believe that we should be accepting of everyone, and should affirm the value of all loving relationships, I would like to see the Church of England standing up for the uniqueness and centrality of marriage between a man and a woman as the foundation of family life and the building block of cohesive communities. I would also like to see affirmation of the biological reality of sex and the rejection of gender identity theories; I believe we should emphasise wholeness, and living at peace with the body God has given us. We should vigorously oppose any attempt to limit consensual sensitive counselling by the introduction of laws banning so-called conversion practices. I believe in the sanctity of human life and reject any form of euthanasia or assisted suicide. I would urge the Church of England to campaign for increased availability of high-quality palliative care.

Finally, I would like to use my experience to be involved in any future discussion of church music, worship and liturgy. I pray that I can be used in some way to help the Church of England become a lively, visible, faithful witness to Christ in every parish in the country.

