

REVD LAURA LENANDER

Proposed: The Revd Dr Christopher Landau

Seconded: The Revd Stuart Howes

A BIT ABOUT ME

I grew up in St Albans and came to faith in childhood. Through some difficult seasons growing up with poor health, I my faith deepened, my love for the Word of God and dependence on prayer became important foundations that continue to shape all of who I am today.

The route to ordained ministry has not been particularly conventional. I married my husband young and we became young parents. I studied Fine Art at University before spending eleven years in Secondary education as an Art, Photography and Graphics teacher, including leadership roles, teacher development and team chaplaincy.

That background in art and education shapes how I approach ministry. I am naturally curious and creative, enjoy asking questions and exploring different perspectives, and care deeply about helping people learn, grow and discover their gifts. Education also taught me the importance of listening well, communicating clearly and recognising that people do not all think, learn or flourish in the same way. I trained for ordination at St Mellitus College, where my dissertation explored creativity within theological education and Christian formation.

I now serve as Leader of Telford Minster, a growing and diverse Bishop's Mission Order church in the centre of one of England's largest new towns. Our vision is to see Lives Renewed, Communities Restored and Church Alive, in Jesus' name.

Beyond Telford, I serve within the New Wine leadership community as Creative Lead for national events and as a ReSource Minister, supporting its work of encouraging 'little, local and ordinary churches' in spiritual renewal. These roles bring me alongside a large variety of Christians in local churches and leaders from different contexts and continually deepen my appreciation of the beauty in the breadth of the Church of England.

I have roots in the evangelical charismatic tradition, with a deep commitment to Scripture, prayer, mission and the work of the Holy Spirit. At the same time, I deeply value the breadth of the Church of England and the richness of our different traditions. I have learned much from Christians whose worship, theology and experience differ from my own, and I long to keep listening, learning and building relationships across the Church, especially across difference.

WHY I AM STANDING

I had not imagined myself standing for General Synod. When others first encouraged me to consider it, my instinct was to say no. But as people from different parts of the Church continued to encourage me, I began to pray which has led me to consider this and stand for election.

A verse I have kept returning to around my heart for the Church of England is Ephesians 2:22: ***"And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit."*** At the heart of it - my desire is that the Church lives this out by the power of the Holy Spirit.

WHAT I HOPE I WOULD BRING

My experience spans leadership, education, mission and developing people, alongside the practical realities of leading a growing church: safeguarding, finance, staffing, governance, pastoral care and mission.

I value careful listening, honest conversation and working constructively with different perspectives. I am willing to ask difficult questions, but seek to do so with kindness, curiosity and an openness to learning from others.

Leading within a Bishop's Mission Order has also given me experience of navigating local and diocesan structures and asking whether our processes genuinely serve the people, churches and mission they are intended to support.

Safeguarding and healthy leadership are particularly important to me. I want us to continue learning from past failures and building cultures in which people are safe, heard and treated with dignity and respect.



WHAT I PARTICULARLY CARE ABOUT

There are many important issues before General Synod and many things I could reflect on here, but three areas particularly shape what I would hope to contribute.

1. Recovering our heart for prayer, mission and hope

I believe the Church's deepest renewal will not ultimately come through better structures or strategies, important though both can be. It begins with God: with prayer, dependence upon the Holy Spirit and confidence in the good news of Jesus.

At a time when there is so much talk in our society about the need for **hope**, the Church has something distinctive to offer. Christian hope is much more than an optimistic mindset or the expectation of improved circumstances. It is rooted in Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, and in the faithfulness of God...

We are also living through extraordinary change in the world today. Technologies such as artificial intelligence are rapidly reshaping how we learn, work, communicate and create. Alongside the challenges, I believe this presents new opportunities for Christian witness as people wrestle with the deep human search for profound questions about truth, creativity, human identity, purpose and what it means to be made in the image of God. The Church should engage thoughtfully and confidently with these questions, pointing to the hope, dignity and understanding of human worth that we ultimately find in Christ.

Week by week I see reasons for that hope: people exploring faith, encountering Jesus, being baptised and confirmed and growing as disciples. I long to see churches renewed, new worshipping communities planted, vocations released and Christians equipped to share their faith in everyday life restoring the communities in which they serve to help build together the Kingdom of God here whilst we await Christ's return.

With my past experience in education I have a particular passion for children and young people. Reaching generations growing up with little inherited Christian faith, and in a world changing at extraordinary speed, is both a significant missionary challenge and an extraordinary opportunity. We need to listen to them, invest in them and help them discover the hope of Jesus for themselves.

2. Enabling local ministry to flourish

Across our diocese, clergy and lay people faithfully serve their communities every day: sharing the gospel, praying with people, discipling new Christians, caring for those in need, working with schools and being present through some of the most significant moments of people's lives. Some of this happens in large and growing churches; much of it happens quietly and faithfully in small local churches and communities.

I am passionate about identifying, equipping and releasing people for ministry, and about good

theological education, formation and ongoing support. National and diocesan structures should enable local ministry rather than unnecessarily burden it. As we face challenges around finance, ministry, buildings and governance, we need the courage to ask what could be simpler and what might need to change.

One question I would keep asking at Synod is: does this help local churches and their people fulfill their calling to make Jesus known, faithfully, safely, creatively within the context and well?

3. Being built together

We live in an increasingly polarised culture, and the Church is not immune from that!

I hold theological convictions and seek to be faithful to Scripture, while believing deeply that Christians are called to listen well, love deeply and resist turning those with whom we disagree into opponents. Unity does not mean pretending our differences are insignificant, and listening does not require us to surrender conviction. It means seeking to understand before responding, speaking honestly without caricaturing others, and remembering that we belong to Christ and to one another.

This is one reason I value the breadth of the Church of England. We need the wisdom and experience of different generations, traditions, cultures, ministries and communities as we seek God together.

Looking forward

I have genuine hope for the future of the Church, not because I underestimate the challenges before us, but because I believe in the faithfulness of God.

If elected, I would seek to serve the clergy of Lichfield Diocese by listening carefully, praying faithfully, representing thoughtfully and communicating clearly.

I would bring experience of church leadership, education, creativity, theological formation, mission and renewal, alongside a willingness to ask constructive and sometimes difficult questions.

I hope to contribute not only through what I might say, but through how I participate: listening, building relationships, working constructively across difference and always remaining open to learning.

Above all, I hope to contribute to a Church that remembers God's faithfulness, recovers its confidence in prayer, mission and Christian hope, enables local churches to flourish, and remains confident in Jesus Christ as together we seek to make him known.

I would be grateful for your support and your vote.

Laura